00098044

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

ESSAYS

CRITICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL

CONTRIBUTED TO THE EDINBURGH REVIEW

BY

HENRY ROGERS

98044

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

NEW EDITION

LONDON
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1874

00098044

To the Memory

OF

RICHARD WHATELY

AND

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

TO WHOM THESE VOLUMES WERE ORIGINALLY INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR

AS AN EXPRESSION OF SINCERE ESTEEM AND ADMIRATION,

AND IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MANY

COURTESIES AND KINDNESSES.

PREFACE.

THE following Essays (with the exception of two now republished from the *Edinburgh Review* for the first time), having been printed four times, and having been now out of print for some months, it seemed to me that, before issuing them again, it might be well so to arrange them as to separate the Literary from the Theological Essays contained in the former edition,—thus enabling the purchaser to obtain either alone. It also suggested itself that one of the Essays, which has been published repeatedly in other forms, and two or three of the others—which, as elicited by political questions of the day, turned principally on subjects of temporary interest—might be judiciously omitted; thus effecting some reduction of bulk, and therefore of price. In this the Publishers have acquiesced.

The principal Essay omitted is that on 'Reason and Faith,' which after having been printed nine or ten times, in various forms, since its first appearance in the *Edinburgh Review*, in 1849, and having been carefully revised and somewhat enlarged in 1866,

has been published in a separate volume, together with sundry Essays on kindred subjects from *Good Words*.* The other Essays, now omitted, turned chiefly on political questions of the day, and have consequently in great measure lost their interest; namely, on the 'Treatment of Criminals,' on the 'Prevention of Crime,' and on 'Revolution and Reform.' The subject of the first was proposed to me by Sir James Stephen (at that time Colonial Secretary), when the question of abandoning the system of transportation was under keen discussion. That of the second was suggested by the first, and had special reference to evils which have been in part remedied by the legislature, or to measures which it has since adopted. The third was elicited by the memorable crisis of 1848, when our own country felt for a moment the vibration of that revolutionary earthquake which passed over Europe.

I have some reason to believe, from the approbation expressed by many of my countrymen, that these Essays were not altogether useless in their day. But it does not seem necessary now to reprint them.

I have in part filled the space which these omitted Essays occupied by two never before published in a separate form;—one on M. Huc's entertaining volumes on China, and the other on the 'Remains' of the lamented William Archer Butler. One principal reason for inserting them is that they include, with

* 'Reason and Faith,' with other Essays, pp. 442, fcap. 8vo. Longman & Co.

the other contents of these two volumes, all the Literary Essays I contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*;—my other contributions to that journal being, like those I now reconsign to the 'tomb of the Capulets,' on subjects of temporary interest.

In the volume of 'Theological Essays,' an article partly biographical and partly critical on Erasmus, but mainly intended to define and illustrate his position in relation to the Reformation, has been inserted from *Good Words*; with that exception, all the Essays in the three volumes are from the *Edinburgh Review*.

To this journal I was an occasional contributor for about eighteen years, and during the reign of several editors. Lord Jeffrey, during the editorship of his son-in-law Mr. Empson, occasionally resumed, when that gentleman was laid aside by illness or other causes, his editorial pen; and gave not a few of the compositions in these volumes the advantage of his long-practised critical judgment, while passing through the press. As I stated in the first edition, 'he expressed, in reference to all of them, that were published in his life-time—perhaps an unmerited—but certainly a most cordial and flattering approbation. His genius and many accomplishments—the opulence of his knowledge, the acuteness, versatility, and brilliancy of his mind, are sufficiently proclaimed by his writings, and universally known to his countrymen; but his kindness of heart and amiability of temper—the qualities which endeared him to so large a circle of friends, and made it impossible for him to have any permanent enemies; the candour and nobleness with which he retracted error in himself, the frankness

and cordiality with which he conceded merit in others,—these traits of character, yet more admirable than any of an intellectual order, only those who knew him can adequately appreciate. "We are still mourning," said a distinguished Edinburgh correspondent (personally a stranger to me), some little time after his death, "the loss of Lord Jeffrey; still filled *desiderio tam cari capitis.* Did you know him? If you did, I need not say you loved him, even more than you admired him. If you did not, you cannot know how worthy of love he was—how full of graces as well as gifts." "His death," said another distinguished correspondent of the same city, "seems quite different from that of any other man. One thinks of it as of the fall of the Calton Hill or of the Castle Rock; so closely had his fame been associated with the fame of the city."'

To him, to Archbishop Whately, Lord Macaulay, and Sir James Stephen, I shall ever feel specially indebted for their spontaneous kindness, in encouraging me in my earlier literary labours.

Cicero tells Atticus that he always kept by him a little book of prefaces or exordiums, to suit the exigencies of his somewhat multifarious writings. I should be glad to be at liberty to go to such a repository on the present occasion; though I am afraid that even Cicero would have been perplexed to find one of these ready-made introductions suited to his purpose, had any one work of his been so unhappily miscellaneous as the contents of these volumes.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

PAGE

I. Life and Writings of Thomas Fuller - 1

II. Andrew Marvel - - - - - 43

III. Luther's Correspondence and Character - 93

IV. Life and Genius of Leibnitz - - - 147

V. Genius and Writings of Pascal - - - 211

VI. Literary Genius of Plato — Character of Socrates - - - - - 270

VII. Genius and Writings of Descartes - - 332

ESSAYS,

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL.

LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THOMAS FULLER.*

THE republication, within the last few years, of all the principal works of this singular author, affords us an opportunity, by no means unwelcome, of canvassing his merits, and assigning him his proper niche in the temple of our literature. Nor is it necessary, we are sure, to make any apology for dedicating a few of our pages to such a subject. He cannot be unworthy of attention, who was a favourite author of Coleridge and Lamb, and of whom the former (certainly in a moment of unreflecting enthusiasm) could write thus: 'Next to Shakspeare, I am not certain whether Thomas Fuller, beyond all other writers,

* 'Edinburgh Review,' Jan. 1842.

1. *The Church History of Britain.* By THOMAS FULLER, D.D. New Edition. 3 vols. 8vo. London: 1831.

2. *The Worthies of England.* By THOMAS FULLER, D.D. New Edition. 3 vols. 8vo. London: 1840.

3. *The History of the Holy War.* By THOMAS FULLER, D.D. New Edition. 12mo. London: 1840.

4. *The Holy State and the Profane State.* By THOMAS FULLER, D.D. New Edition. 8vo. London. 1841.

5. *Good Thoughts in Bad Times, and Good Thoughts in Worse Times.* By THOMAS FULLER, D.D. New Edition. 12mo. London: 1840.

does not excite in me the sense and emotion of the marvellous;—the degree in which any given faculty, or combination of faculties, is possessed and manifested, so far surpassing what one would have thought possible in a single mind, as to give one's admiration the flavour and quality of wonder.' Let this statement of a critic, the soundness of whose literary judgments, generally correct and often admirable, cannot always be relied upon, require what abatement it may, it may be safely said, that there is scarcely any writer, whose intellectual character will better repay an attempt at analysis than that of Fuller.

We set about our task the more willingly, as we believe it to be an act of bare justice. We are convinced that posterity has dealt hardly by his memory, and that there are hundreds who have been better remembered with far less claims to that honour. Thus it is singular that even Mr. Hallam, in his recent 'History of European Literature,' should not have bestowed upon him any special notice; dismissing him with only a slight allusion, in a note upon another subject.* Yet Fuller was not only one of the most voluminous—an equivocal indication of merit, it must be allowed—but one of the most original writers in our language. If he had merely resembled those of his dull contemporaries, who wrote apparently for writing's sake,—without genius or fancy, without any of those graces of thought or diction, which have a special claim on the historian of literature;—if his folios had been collections of third-rate sermons or

* Hallam, vol. iii. p. 104. It must not be supposed that any serious censure of Mr. Hallam's great work is here intended. If it be singular that Fuller has been so summarily dealt with, it would have been far more singular had there been *no* important omissions. The real wonder is, that the author should have been able at all to dispose of subjects, so immense and so multifarious, in so moderate a compass; to *daguerreotype* so boundless a landscape, on so small a surface, with such fidelity and distinctness.

heavy commentaries; of common-place spread out to the last degree of tenuity, scarcely tolerable even in the briefest form in which truisms can be addressed to our impatience, and perfectly insupportable when prolonged into folios — there would be sufficient reason for the critic's neglect. But it is far otherwise: though Fuller's works, like those of many of his contemporaries, are sometimes covered with rubbish, and swollen with redundancies, they are, as is the case also with some of them, instinct with genius. Like Taylor, and Barrow, and Sir Thomas Brown, he wrote with a vigour and originality, with a fertility of thought and imagery, and a general felicity of style, which, considering the quantity of his compositions, and the haste with which he produced them, impress us with wonder at his untiring activity and preternatural fecundity. He has scattered with careless prodigality, over the pages of his many works, thoughts and images which, if collected, properly disposed, and purified from the worthless matter which encrusts, and often buries them, would have insured him a place beside those who, by writing less and elaborating it more, by concentrating their strength on works of moderate compass and high finish, have secured themselves a place not only in the libraries, but in the memories, of their readers; and are not simply honoured with an occasional reference, but live in perpetual and familiar quotation.

Before proceeding further with the analysis of Fuller's intellectual character, it may be advisable to give a rapid sketch of the principal events of his life.

He was born in 1608 at Aldwincle, in Northamptonshire; his father was the Rev. T. Fuller, rector of St. Peter's in that village. His early education seems to have been conducted chiefly under the paternal roof, and that so successfully, that at twelve years of age he was sent to Queen's College, Cambridge; the Master of which was his maternal uncle, Dr. Davenant, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury. In

1624-5, he took his degree of B. A., and that of M. A. in 1628. He then removed to Sidney College, and, after a short interval, was chosen minister of St. Bennet's, Cambridge, where his great talents as a preacher soon rendered him extremely popular. Preferment now came rapidly. In 1631, he was chosen fellow of Sidney College, and made a prebendary of Salisbury. The same year was signalised by his maiden publication. Like many other men of powerful imagination, who have eventually distinguished themselves as prose writers, he had in early life toyed a little with the Muses. His first work was poetical, and we may be sure that it was steeped in the quaintness which was equally characteristic of the age and of the individual. The very title, indeed, smacks of that love of alliteration of which his writings are so full. It was entitled 'David's Heinous Sin, Hearty Repentance, and Heavy Punishment.' It is now extremely scarce. Peace to its ashes! its author's prose writings have a better and a surer claim to remembrance.

Soon after entering priests' orders, he was presented to the rectory of Broad Winsor, in Dorsetshire. In 1635 he repaired again to Cambridge, to take his degree of Bachelor of Divinity; and, on his return to Broad Winsor, got rid of another kind of bachelorship in a happy marriage. This event took place in 1638; but his felicity was not of long continuance. After giving birth to one son, his wife died, about the year 1641. In the quietude of Broad Winsor 'he began to complete,' to use a curious phrase of one of his biographers, 'several works he had planned at Cambridge;' but, getting sick of solitude, and impatient to know something more of public affairs, he repaired to London, where his pulpit talents soon obtained him an invitation to the lectureship of the Savoy. In 1640 he published his deservedly celebrated 'History of the Holy War,' which gained him some money and more reputation. He was a member

of the Convocation which assembled at Westminster in 1640, and has left us a minute account of its proceedings in his 'Church History.' In 1642 he preached at Westminster Abbey, on the anniversary of the king's inauguration; and the sermon contained some dangerous allusions to the state of public affairs. His text was characteristic: — 'Yea, let him take all, so that my lord the king return in peace.' The sermon, when printed, gave great umbrage to the parliamentary party, and involved the preacher in no little odium. In this year he published his best and most popular work, entitled 'The Holy and Profane State.' Refusing to take an oath to the Parliament, except with certain reservations, Fuller now left London and repaired to the king at Oxford, by whom he was well received. The king was anxious to hear him preach. Fuller complied; but, strange to say, he managed to displease the royalists as much as he had before displeased the patriots. His ill-success on both occasions may be taken as an argument of his sincerity and moderation, whatever may be thought of his worldly wisdom.

During his stay at Oxford he resided at Lincoln College; but he was not long to escape the cup which, in those sad times, came round to all parties. Sequestration was pronounced against him, and was embittered by the loss of all his books and manuscripts. This misfortune was partly repaired by the generosity of Henry Lord Beauchamp and Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, — the latter of whom bestowed upon him the remains of his father's library. In order to obviate the suspicion of indifference to the king's cause, he now sought and obtained, from Sir Ralph Hopton, a chaplaincy in the royal army; and employed his leisure, while rambling through the country, in collecting materials for his future work, 'The Worthies of England.' It appears that, in his capacity of chaplain, he could, on occasion, beat 'drum ecclesiastic' as well as any of the preachers in Cromwell's army;

for we are told, that when a party of the royalists were besieged at Basinghouse, Fuller animated the garrison to so vigorous a defence, that Sir William Waller was compelled to abandon the siege. When the royal forces were driven into Cornwall, Fuller, taking refuge in Exeter, resumed his studies, and preached regularly to the citizens. During his stay here, he was appointed chaplain to the Princess Henrietta Maria (then an infant), and was presented to the living of Dorchester. He was present at the siege of Exeter, in the course of which an incident occurred, so curious in itself, and narrated by Fuller (who vouches for the truth of his statement) in so characteristic a style, that no apology is necessary for inserting his account of it here; leaving the reader to philosophise upon it in any way that may seem to him most proper. The extract is from the 'Worthies of England:'—'When the city of Exeter was besieged by the parliamentary forces, so that only the south side thereof, towards the sea, was open unto it, incredible numbers of larks were found in that open quarter, for multitude like *quails* in the *wildernesse*, though (blessed be God!) unlike them both in *cause* and *effect*, as not desired with man's destruction, nor sent with God's anger, as appeared by their safe digestion into wholesome nourishment: hereof I was an *eye* and a *mouth* witnesse. I will save my credit in not conjecturing any number, knowing that herein, though I should *stoop* beneath the *truth*, I should *mount* above *belief*. They were as fat as plentiful; so that, being sold for twopence a-dozen and under, the poor, who could have no *cheaper*, as the rich no *better meat*, used to make pottage of them, boyling them down therein. Several natural causes were assigned hereof. . . . . However, the *cause of causes* was *Divine Providence*.'

After the taking of Exeter, Fuller once more repaired to London, where he obtained the lectureship at St. Clement's, Lombard Street, and subsequently

that of St. Bride's, Fleet Street. He does not appear to have long discharged the functions of either, 'having been forbidden' (to use his own language), 'till further order, the exercise of his public preaching.' Silenced though he was, however, this did not prevent his being presented, in 1648, to the living of Waltham. For this he was indebted to the Earl of Carlisle, to whom he had become chaplain. To men of less activity of mind, and less zealous to do good, compulsory silence might have been no unacceptable concomitant of a rich living; but not to Fuller. This year and the following he spent chiefly in the preparation of one of the quaintest of all his writings,—his 'Pisgah-sight of Palestine and the Confines thereof, with the History of the Old and New Testaments acted thereon.' The work was illustrated by several curious engravings, in which the artists seem to have vied in quaintness with the author, and which are as characteristic of the spirit of the age as the letterpress which accompanied them. In the two or three following years he published several tracts and sermons, which have long since passed into oblivion. In 1654 he married again, and into a noble family; his wife being the sister of Viscount Baltinglass. In 1655, as Mr. Chalmers tells us, he persisted in the discharge of his ministerial functions, 'notwithstanding Cromwell's prohibition of all persons from preaching or teaching schools, who had been adherents of the late king.' We shall not stop to inquire whether the biographer has been altogether just to Cromwell, in omitting to state that the ordinance in question was immediately modified, on Archbishop Usher's representation of its hardship, and its application limited to such clergymen as had been *political* offenders. It is more to our purpose to observe, that we may account for Fuller's continuing to preach, without either accusing him of rash zeal, or praising him for conscientious resistance; inasmuch as he was duly authorised so to do by the Court of 'Triers,' before whom he had been examined.

Calamy has given us a droll account of Fuller's perplexities when summoned to this ordeal. He doubtless had some misgivings as to whether he might be able to answer satisfactorily all the inquisitorial inquiries of this strange court; and whether he might not get *limed* by some of their theological subtleties. In this dilemma, he applied to the celebrated John Howe (then one of Cromwell's chaplains), whose catholic spirit ever prompted him to exert whatever influence he possessed in behalf of the good men of all parties. 'You may observe, sir,' said Fuller to him, 'that I am a somewhat corpulent man, and I am to go through a very *strait* passage. I beg you would be so good as to give me a shove, and help me through.' Howe gave him the best advice in his power. When the 'Triers' inquired, 'whether he had ever had any experience of a work of grace in his heart?' Fuller replied, in terms of cautious generality, that 'he could appeal to the Searcher of all hearts, that he made a conscience of his very thoughts;' — implying, doubtless, that it was not without the most diligent investigation of his motives, that he had ventured on the sacred office. With this answer they were satisfied, and it was, perhaps, well for Fuller that it was not more specific.

In 1656, he published his 'Church History of Great Britain,' to which was appended, 'The History of the University of Cambridge,' and 'The History of Waltham Abbey.' His 'Church History' called forth some animadversions from Dr. Heylyn, to which Fuller replied. In 1658, Lord Berkeley, one of his many patrons, made him his chaplain, and presented him to the rectory of Cranford in Middlesex. Just before the Restoration, he was reinstated in his lectureship in the Savoy, as also in his prebend at Salisbury; and, shortly after that event, was appointed chaplain extraordinary to the king, and created Doctor of Divinity by *mandamus*. He was within sight of a bishopric, when death brought all his earthly prospects

to a close in 1661. He was buried in his church at Cranford, in the chancel of which there is a monument to his memory. The Latin inscription, which has the rare merit of telling but little more than the truth, closes with an antithetical conceit, so much in Fuller's vein, that it would have done his heart good, could he but have read the following sentence:—'Hic jacet Thomas Fuller . . . . Qui dum viros Angliæ illustres opere posthumo immortalitate consecrare meditatus est, ipse immortalitatem est consecutus.' This alludes to the 'Worthies of England,' partly printed before his death, but published by his son.

Fuller is one of the few voluminous authors who are never tedious. No matter where we pitch, we are sure to alight on something which stimulates attention; and perhaps there is no author equally voluminous, to whom we could so fearlessly apply the *ad aperturam libri* test. Let the subject be ever so dry or barren, he is sure to surround it with some unlooked-for felicity, or at least some entertaining oddity of thought or expression: the most meagre matter of fact shall suggest either some solid reflection or curious inference, some ingenious allusion or humorous story; or, if nothing better, some sportive alliteration or ludicrous pun. To this must be added, that his reflections and his images are in general so exceedingly novel, (often, it is true, far-fetched and quaint enough, but often also very beautiful,) that they surprise as well as please; and please in a great measure by surprising us. Probably there is no author who so often breaks upon his readers with turns of thought for which they are totally unprepared; nor would it be unamusing to watch the countenance of any intelligent man while perusing his pages. We will venture to say, that few other writers in the English language could produce more rapid variations of expression. We should see the face, in succession, mantling with a smile—distended into a broad grin—breaking out

into loud laughter; the eyebrows now arched to an expression of sudden wonder and pleased surprise; the whole visage now clouded with a momentary shade of vexation over some wanton spoiling of a fine thought—now quieted again into placidity, by the presentation of something truly wise or beautiful, and anon chuckling afresh over some outrageous pun or oddity. The same expression could not be maintained for any three paragraphs—perfect gravity scarcely for three sentences.

The activity of Fuller's suggestive faculty must have been immense. Though his principal characteristic is wit, and that too so disproportionate, that it conceals in its ivy-like luxuriance the robust wisdom about which it coils itself, his illustrations are drawn from every source and quarter, and are ever ready at his bidding. In the variety, frequency, and novelty of his illustrations, he strongly resembles two of the most imaginative writers in our language, though in all other respects still more unlike them than they were unlike one another—Jeremy Taylor and Edmund Burke. Each, indeed, has his peculiar characteristics, even in those very points in which they may be compared. The imagination of Jeremy Taylor takes its hue from his vast learning, and derives from classical and historical allusions more than half its sources of illustration; that of Fuller, from the wit which forms the prime element in his intellectual constitution. Burke, on the other hand, had comparatively little wit; at least it was no characteristic: the images his mind supplies are chiefly distinguished by splendour and beauty. Still, in a boundless profusion of imagery of one kind or another, available on all occasions and on all subjects, and capable of clothing sterility itself with sudden freshness and verdure, they all resemble one another, and are almost unequalled among English prose writers. Most marvellous and enviable is that fecundity of fancy, which can adorn whatever it touches—which can invest naked fact

and dry reasoning with unlooked-for beauty—make flowerets bloom even on the brow of the precipice, and, when nothing better can be had, can turn the very substance of rock itself into moss and lichens. This faculty is incomparably the most important for the vivid and attractive *exhibition* of truth to the minds of men; and, taken in connection with other qualities, which neither Taylor nor Fuller possessed, namely, method and taste, will do more to give books permanent power and popularity than even the very truths they contain. Indeed, that, to a great extent, may be said of every discourse, which Fuller says more particularly of sermons, 'that though reasons are the pillars of the fabric, similitudes are the windows which give the best lights.'

We have said that Fuller's faculty of illustration is boundless; surely it may be safely asserted, since it can diffuse even over the driest geographical and chronological details an unwonted interest. We have a remarkable exemplification of this in those chapters of his 'Holy War' in which he gives what he quaintly calls 'a Pisgah-sight, or Short Survey of Palestine in general;' and a still stronger, if possible, in his 'Description of the Citie of Jerusalem.' In these chapters, what in other hands would have proved little more than a bare enumeration of names, sparkles with perpetual wit, and is enlivened with all sorts of vivacious allusions. One or two short specimens of the arts by which he manages to make such a 'survey' attractive will be found below*; but much of the effect is lost by their being presented in a detached form.

* 'Nain, where our Saviour raised the widow's son, so that she was twice a mother, yet had but one child.' 'Mount Carmel, the Jewish Parnassus, where the prophets were so conversant.' 'Aphek, whose walls falling down, gave both death and gravestones (!) to 27,000 of Benhadad's soldiers.' 'Tyre, anciently the Royal Exchange of the world.' 'The River Kishon, the besom to sweep away Sisera's army.' 'Gilboa, the mountain that David cursed, that neither dew nor rain should fall on it; but of late, some English travellers climbing this

The principal attribute of Fuller's genius is unquestionably wit; though, as Coleridge has well observed, 'this very circumstance has defrauded him of his due praise for the practical wisdom of the thoughts —for the beauty and variety of the truths into which he shaped the stuff.' If it be inquired what was the character of his wit, it must be replied, it is so various, and assumes so many different shapes, that one might as well attempt to define wit itself; and this, seeing the comprehensive Barrow has contented himself with an enumeration of its forms, in despair of being able to include them all within the circle of a precise definition, we certainly shall not at present attempt. Suffice it to say, that all the varieties recorded in that singularly felicitous passage are exemplified in the pages of our author. Of *his* wit, as of *wit* in general, it may be truly said, that 'sometimes it lieth in pat allusion to a known story, or in seasonable application of a trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale; sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense, or the affinity of their sound; sometimes it is wrapped in a dress of humorous expression; sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude; sometimes it is lodged in a sly question, in a smart answer, in a quirkish reason,

mountain were well wetted, David not cursing it by a prophetical spirit, but in a poetical rapture.' 'Gilgal, where the manna ceased, the Israelites having till then been fellow-commoners with the angels.' 'Gibeon, whose inhabitants cozened Joshua with a pass of false-dated antiquity. Who could have thought that clouted shoes could have covered so much subtility?' 'Gaza, the gates whereof Samson carried away; and being sent for to make sport in the house of Dagon, acted such a tragedy as plucked down the stage, slew himself and all the spectators.' 'Maephelah, where the patriarchs were buried, whose bodies took livery and seisin in behalf of their posterity, who were to possess the whole land.' 'Edrei, the city of Og, on whose giant-like proportions the rabbis have more giant-like lies.' 'Pisgah, where Moses viewed the land: hereabouts the angel buried him, and also buried the grave, lest it should occasion idolatry.'

in a shrewd intimation, in cunningly diverting or cleverly retorting an objection; sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech, in a tart irony, in a lusty hyperbole, in a startling metaphor, in a plausible reconciling of contradictions, or in acute nonsense; sometimes a scenical representation of persons or things, a counterfeit speech, a mimical look or gesture, passeth for it; sometimes an affected simplicity; sometimes a presumptuous bluntness giveth it being; sometimes it riseth only from a lucky hitting upon what is strange; sometimes from a crafty wresting obvious matter to the purpose. Often it consisteth in one knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable and inexplicable; being answerable to the numberless rovings of fancy, and windings of language.'

Of all the preceding varieties of wit, next to the 'play with words and phrases,' perhaps Fuller most delighted in 'pat allusions to a known story;' 'in seasonable application of a trivial saying;' 'in a tart irony' and 'an affected simplicity;' in the 'odd similitude,' and the 'quirkish reason.' In these he certainly excelled. We have noted some brief specimens, which we here give the reader. Speaking of the Jesuits he says, 'such is the charity of the Jesuits, that they never owe any man any ill-will—making present payment thereof.' Of certain prurient canons in which virtue is in imminent danger of being tainted by impure descriptions of purity, he shrewdly remarks —'One may justly admire how these canonists, being pretended virgins, could arrive at the knowledge of the criticisms of all obscenity.' Touching the miraculous coffin in which St. Audré was deposited, he slyly says—'Under the ruined walls of Grantchester or Cambridge, a coffin was found, with a cover correspondent, both of white marble, which did fit her body so exactly, as if (which one may believe was true) it was *made* for it.' On Machiavel's saying, 'that he who undertakes to write a history must be of no re-

ligion,' he observes, 'if so, Machiavel himself was the best qualified of any in his age to be a good historian.' On the unusual conjunction of great learning and great wealth in the case of Selden, he remarks, 'Mr. Selden had some coins of the Roman emperors, and a great many more of our English kings.' After commenting on the old story of St. Dunstan's pinching the Devil's nose with the red-hot tongs, he absurdly cries out — 'But away with all suspicions and queries. None need to doubt of the truth thereof, finding it in a sign painted in Fleet Street, near Temple Bar.' The bare, bald style of the schoolmen, he tells us, some have attributed to design, 'lest any of the vermin of equivocation should hide themselves under the *nap* of their words.' On excessive attention to fashion in dress he says — 'Had some of our gallants been with the Israelites in the wilderness, when for forty years their clothes waxed not old, they would have been vexed, though their clothes were whole, to have been so long in one fashion.' Speaking of the melancholy forebodings which have sometimes haunted the death-bed of good men, he quaintly tells us, 'that the Devil is most busy in the last day of his term, and a tenant to be *outed* cares not what mischief he does.' Of unreasonable expectations he says, with characteristic love of quibbling, 'those who *expect* what in reason they *cannot* expect, *may* expect.' He thus happily illustrates the aid which the memory derives from method; 'one will carry twice more weight trussed and packed up in bundles, than when it lies untowardly flapping and hanging about his shoulders.' The court jester he wittily and truly characterises thus — 'It is an office which none but he that hath wit *can* perform, and none but he that wants wit *will* perform.' Of modest women, who nevertheless dress themselves in questionable attire, he says — 'I must confess some honest women may go thus, but no whit the honester for going thus. That ship may have Castor and Pollux for the sign, which, notwithstanding, has St.

Paul for the lading.' He thus speaks of anger—'He that keepeth anger long in his bosom, giveth place to the Devil. And why should we make room for him who will crowd in too fast of himself? Heat of passion makes our souls to crack, and the Devil creeps in at the crannies.' Of marriages between the young and the old, he shrewdly remarks—'They that marry ancient people, merely in expectation to bury them, hang themselves in hopes some one may come and cut the halter.' Of the affectedly grave he tells us, 'these sometimes not only cover their defects, but get praise. They do wisely to counterfeit a reservedness, and to keep their chests always locked—not for fear any should steal treasure thence, but lest some should look in and see that there is nothing in them.' After telling us that an udutiful child will be repaid in the same coin by his own children, he says, 'One complained that never father had so undutiful a child as he had.' 'Yes,' said the son, with more truth than grace, 'my grandfather had.' By way of illustrating the superior efficacy of example, he says—'A father that whipt his son for swearing, and swore himself while he whipt him, did more harm by his example than good by his correction.' Of intellectual deficiencies in the very tall, he remarks, 'that oft-times such who are built four stories high, are observed to have little in their cockloft;' and of 'naturals,' that 'their heads are sometimes so little, that there is no room for wit; sometimes so long, that there is no wit for so much room.' And again; 'generally nature hangs out a sign of simplicity in the face of a fool, and there is enough in his countenance for a hue and cry to take him on suspicion. Yet some by their faces may pass current enough till they cry themselves down by their speaking, for men know the bell is cracked when they hear it tolled.'

Of the 'quirkish reason,' mentioned as one of the species of wit in the above-recited passage of Barrow, the pages of our author are full. What can be more

ridiculous than the reason he assigns, in his description of the 'good wife,' for the *order* of Paul's admonitions to husbands and wives in the third chapter of the epistle to the Colossians? 'The apostle first adviseth women to submit themselves to their husbands, and then counselleth men to love their wives. And sure it was fitting that women should first have their lesson given them, because it is hardest to be learned, and therefore they need have the more time to con it. For the same reason we first begin with the character of a good wife.' Not less droll, or rather far more so, is the manner in which he subtilizes on the command, that we are not 'to let the sun go down on our wrath.' 'Anger kept till the next morning, with manna, doth putrefy and corrupt; save that manna, corrupted not at all, (and anger most of all,) kept the next Sabbath. St. Paul saith, "Let not the sun go down on your wrath," to carry news to the antipodes in another world of thy revengeful nature. Yet let us take the apostle's meaning rather than his words, with all possible speed to depose our passion; not understanding him so literally that we may take leave to be angry till sunset; then might our wrath lengthen with the days, and men in Greenland, where day lasts above a quarter of a year, have plentiful scope of revenge.'* One more specimen of the 'quirkish reason,' and we will have done. Of memory he says — 'Philosophers place it in the rear of the head; and it seems the mine

* On this passage Charles Lamb makes the following characteristic remarks:—'This whimsical prevention of a consequence which no one would have thought of deducing, setting up an *absurdum* on purpose to hunt it down—placing guards, as it were, at the very outposts of possibility—gravely giving out laws to insanity, and prescribing moral fences to distempered intellects, could never have entered into a head less entertainingly constructed than that of Fuller, or Sir Thomas Browne, the very air of whose style the conclusion of this passage most aptly imitates.' Lamb has made a small selection from the racy sayings of Fuller, very few of which, however, are included in those we have here presented to the reader. In truth, they are so numerous that they may be picked up in every page.

of memory lies there, because there men naturally dig for it, *scratching it* when they are at a loss!'

Of all the *forms* of wit, Fuller affects that of the satirist least. Though he can be caustic, and sometimes is so, he does not often indulge the propensity; and when he does it is without bitterness; a sly irony, a good-humoured gibe, which tickles, but does not sting, is all he ventures upon. Perhaps there is no mental quality whatever, which so much depends on the temperament and moral habitudes of the individual, as this of wit; so much so, indeed, that often they will wholly determine its character. We are inclined to think, that he who is master of any one species of wit, might make himself no mean proficient in all; whether it shall have the quality of waspish spleen, or grave banter, or broad and laughing humour, depends far more on moral than on intellectual causes. Imagine Fuller's wit in a man of melancholic temperament, querulous disposition, sickly health, morbid sensibility, or irritable vanity—and we should have a satirist whose malignity would repel, still more than his wit would attract. The sallies of our author are enjoyed without any drawback, even when they are a little satirical; so innocent, so childlike, so free from malice, are they. His own temperament eminently favoured the development of the more amiable qualities of wit: he was endowed with that happy buoyancy of spirit, which, next to religion itself, is the most precious possession of man; and which is second only to religion, in enabling us to bear with ease the trials and burdens of humanity. Both conspired to render him habitually light-hearted. With such a temperament, thus added to unfeigned piety and unfeigned benevolence; with a heart open to all innocent pleasures, and purged from the 'leaven of malice and uncharitableness,' it was as natural that he should be full of good-tempered mirth, as it is for the grasshopper to chirp, or the bee to hum, or the birds to warble, in the spring breeze and the bright sunshine

His very physiognomy was an index to his natural character. As described by his contemporaries, he had light flaxen hair, bright, blue, and laughing eyes, a frank and open visage. Such a face was a sort of guarantee, that the wit with which he was endowed could not be employed for any purpose inconsistent with constitutional good-nature. Accordingly, never was mirth more devoid of malice than his; unseasonable and in excess it doubtless often is, but this is all that can be charged upon it. His gibes are so pleasant, so tinctured by an overflowing *bonhommie*, that we doubt whether the very subjects of them could forbear laughing in sympathy, though at their own expense. Equally assured we are, that, as he never uttered a joke on another with any malice, so he was quite ready to laugh when any joke was uttered upon himself. Never dreaming of ill-will to his neighbour, and equally unsuspicious of any towards himself, it must have been a bitter joke indeed in which he could not join. It is rarely that a professed joker relishes wit when directed against himself; and the manner in which he receives it may usually be taken as an infallible indication of his temper. He well knows the difference between laughing at another, and being laughed at himself. Fuller was not one of that *irritabile genus*, who wonder that any should be offended at their innocent pleasantry; and yet can never find any pleasantry innocent but their own! There is a story told, which, though not true, *ought* to have been true, and which, if not denied by Fuller, would have been supposed to authenticate itself. It is said that he once 'caught a Tartar' in a certain Mr. Sparrowhawk, of whom he asked, 'What was the difference between an owl and a sparrowhawk?' The reply was, that 'an owl was *fuller* in the head, and *fuller* in the face, and *fuller* all over!' We believe that if the retort had been really uttered, it would have been received by the object of it, not with that curious expression of face so common on such occasions, in which

constrained mirth struggles with mortified vanity, and simulated laughter vainly strives to cover real annoyance, but with a peal of hearty gratulation.*

As the temperament of Fuller was most cheerful, and a pledge for the innocence of his wit, so he jested by what may be called a necessity of his nature—on all subjects, at all times, under all circumstances. Wit, in one or other of its multitudinous shapes, was the habitual attire of his thoughts and feelings. With the kindest heart in the world, he could not recite even a calamitous story without investing it with a tinge of the ludicrous. It would seem as if, in his case, a jest were the natural expression of all emotion; he is no more to be wondered at for mingling his condolence and his lamentations with merriment, than are other men for accompanying them with tears and

* The story is, however, more than doubtful; it is expressly denied by Fuller himself, in his reply to Heylyn's 'Examen Historicum.' The circumstances which led to the denial are curious. Fuller, in his 'Ecclesiastical History,' had related of Laud, that having once demanded of a lady, who had lately become a proselyte to Popery, the reason of the change, he received for answer, that 'she hated a crowd.' Upon being further pressed to explain so dark a saying, she said, 'Your Lordship and many others are making for Rome as fast as ye can, and therefore, to prevent a press, I went before you.' This anecdote roused the indignation of Heylyn, who, by way of showing the impropriety of recording in print idle reports to the disadvantage of individuals, tells of a 'retort' on Fuller, substantially the same with that related of Mr. Sparrowhawk, but disguised in a form, and attended with circumstances which rob it of more than half its point, and make Fuller appear to greater disadvantage than that of having merely been discomfited by a happy repartee. Fuller thus replied:—'*My* tale was *true* and *new*, never printed before; whereas his is *old* (made, it seems, on one of my name, printed before I was born) and *false*, never by man or woman retorted on me. I had rather my name should make many causelessly merry, than any justly sad; and, seeing it lieth equally open and obvious to praise and dispraise, I shall as little be elated when flattered - "Fuller of wit and learning," as dejected when flouted—"Fuller of folly and ignorance."'

sighs. An epitaph in his hand would have been a sort of epigram, not free from grotesque humour; and his ordinary pulpit discourses must, we are convinced, have often contained passages which severely tried the gravity of his audience. In confirmation of all we have said, we may remark, that he actually finds it impossible to suppress his vivacious pleasantry even in the most tragical parts of his 'histories,' and tells the most rueful tidings in so droll a manner as sets all sobriety at defiance. One or two odd specimens we cannot refrain from laying before the reader. He thus recounts a 'lamentable accident' which befell a congregation of Catholics at Blackfriars:—'The sermon began to incline to the middle, the day to the end thereof; when on the sudden the floor fell down whereon they were assembled. It gave no charitable warning groan beforehand, but cracked, broke, and fell, all in an instant. Many were killed, more bruised, all frighted. Sad sight, to behold the flesh and blood of different persons mingled together, *and the brains of one on the head of another!* One lacked a leg; another, an arm; a third, *whole and entire, wanting nothing but breath, stifled in the ruins.*' Was ever such a calamity so mirthfully related? But one of the most singular instances of the peculiarity in question, is contained in his account of the capture and execution of the principal conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot. It is so characteristic, that no apology is required for inserting one or two extracts below.*

* 'Meantime Catesby, Percy, Rookwood, both the Wrights, and Thomas Winter, were hovering about London, to attend the issue of the matter. Having sate so long abrood, and hatching nothing, they began to suspect all their eggs had proved addle. Yet, betwixt hope and fear, they and their servants post down into the country, through Warwick and Worcester, into Staffordshire. Of traitors they turn felons, breaking up stables and stealing horses as they went. But many of their own men, by a far more lawful felony, stole away from their masters, leaving them to shift for themselves. The neighbouring counties, and their own consciences, rise up against these riotous roisterers, as

So exuberant is Fuller's wit, that, as his very melancholy is mirthful, so his very wisdom wears motley. But it is wisdom notwithstanding; nor are there many authors, in whom we shall find so much solid sense and practical sagacity, in spite of the grotesque disguise in which they masque themselves. Nothing can be more true than the remark already

yet unknown for traitors. At last Sir Richard Walsh, high sheriff of Worcestershire, overtook them at Holbeck, in Staffordshire, at the house of Mr. Stephen Littleton; where, upon their resistance, the two Wrights were killed, Rookwood and Thomas Winter shrewdly wounded. As for Percy and Catesby, they fought desperately for their lives, as knowing no quarter but *quartering* would be given unto them; and, as if they scorned to turn their backs to any but themselves, setting back to back, they fought against all that assaulted them. Many swords were drawn upon them, but "gunpowder" must do the deed, which discharged that bullet which despatched them both. Never were two bad men's deaths more generally lamented of all good men; only on this account — that they lived no longer, to be forced to a further discovery of their secret associates. It must not be forgotten, how, some hours before their apprehension, as these plotters were drying dank gunpowder in an inn, a miller casually coming in (haply not heeding the black meal on the hearth), by careless casting on of a billet, fired the gunpowder: up flies the chimney with part of the house; all therein are frightened, most hurt; but especially Catesby and Rookwood had their faces soundly scorched, so bearing in their bodies, not στίγματα, "the marks of Our Lord Jesus Christ," but the print of their own impieties. Well might they guess how good that their cup of cruelty was, whose dregs they meant others should drink, by this little *sip* which they themselves had unwillingly tasted thereof. The rest were all at London solemnly arraigned, convicted, condemned. So foul the fact, so fair the proof, they could say nothing for themselves. Master Tresham dying in the prison, prevented a more ignominious end.' . . . 'They all craved testimony that they died Roman Catholics. My pen shall grant them this their last and so equal petition, and bears *witness to all whom it may concern, that they lived and died in the Romish religion.* And although the heinousness of their offence might, with some colour of justice, have angered severity into cruelty against them, yet, so favourably were they proceeded with, that most of their sons or heirs, except since disinherited by their own prodigality, at this day enjoy their paternal possessions.'

quoted from Coleridge, that Fuller's wit has defrauded him of some of the praise of wisdom which is his due. There was nothing, however, of the reality, whatever there might be of the appearance of profane, or inhuman levity, in his mode of dealing with sacred or serious subjects. His was the natural expression of much hilarity conjoined with much wit. He would have been mirthful, whether he had had much wit or not; having also much wit, his mirth expressed itself in the forms most natural to him. He spoke only as he felt; and though we may think that another mode of speech would have been more proper, and better adapted to the ordinary feelings of mankind under the circumstances, we cannot consent to rank the *facetiæ* of Fuller on grave subjects, with the profane heartless witticisms of those with whom nothing is sacred, and who speak lightly because they feel lightly. His whole life, and even his whole writings, prove him to have been possessed of genuine veneration for all that is divine, and genuine sympathy with all that is human.

The limits within which wit and humour may be lawfully used, are well laid down by himself in his 'Holy and Profane State,' in the essays on 'Jesting and Gravity,' and in his character of the 'Faithful Minister.' It would be too much to say that he has always acted strictly up to his own maxims; but it may be safely asserted that he seldom violates the most important of them, and that, when he did, it was in perfect unconsciousness of so doing. Of *profane* jests, he says, in his strong manner—'Jest not with the two-edged sword of God's word. Will nothing please thee to wash thy hands in but the font? or to drink healths in but the church chalice?' On *inhuman* jests, he says,—'Scoff not at the natural defects of any which are not in their power to amend. Oh, it is cruelty to beat a cripple with his own crutches!' In another place, he quaintly says, 'It is *unnatural* to laugh at a natural.' Speaking of the 'Faithful

Minister,' he says, 'that he will not use a light comparison to make thereof a grave application, for fear lest his poison go further than his antidote.' But his sermons on the book of 'Ruth' contain many curious instances of his oblivion of this maxim; of which, a striking one is given by the editor of the recent edition of his 'Holy and Profane State.' In his essay on 'Gravity,' he touchingly pleads for a charitable construction of the levities of a mirthful temperament. 'Some men,' says he, 'are of a very cheerful disposition; and God forbid that all such should be condemned for lightness! Oh, let not any envious eye disinherit men of that which is their "portion in this life, comfortably to enjoy the blessings thereof!" Yet gravity must prune, not root out our mirth.' Gravity must have had hard work to do this in his own case; for as he himself says in another place—beautifully commenting on a well-known line of Horace—'That fork must have strong tines wherewith one would thrust out nature.'

The imagination of Fuller, though generally displaying itself in the forms imposed by his overflowing wit, was yet capable of suggesting images of great beauty, and of true poetic quality. Though lost in the perpetual obtrusion of that faculty to which every other was compelled to minister, it is brilliant enough to have made the reputation of any inferior writer; and we believe that what Coleridge has said of his wisdom, might as truly be said of his fancy;—his wit has equally defrauded both of the admiration due to them.

Fuller's imagination is often happily employed in embodying some strong apophthegm, or maxim of practical wisdom, in a powerful and striking metaphor; the very best form in which they can be presented to us. There occur in his writings very many sentences of this kind, which would not be altogether unworthy of Bacon himself, and in which, as in that far greater genius, we have the combination of solid truth, beau-

tiful imagery, and graceful expression;—where we know not which most to admire—the value of the gem, the lustre of the polish, or the appropriateness of the setting.

In many respects, Fuller may be considered the very type and exemplar of that large class of religious writers of the seventeenth century, to which we emphatically apply the term 'quaint.' That word has long ceased to mean what it once meant. By derivation, and by original usage, it first signified 'scrupulously elegant,' 'refined,' 'exact,' 'accurate,' beyond the reach of common art. In time it came to be applied to whatever was designed to indicate these characteristics—though excogitated with so elaborate a subtlety, as to trespass on ease and nature. In a word, it was applied to what was ingenious and fantastic, rather than tasteful or beautiful. It is now wholly used in this acceptation; and always implies some violation of true taste, some deviation from what the 'natural' requires under the given circumstances. The application of the word both to literary compositions and to the more material products of art, of course simultaneously underwent similar modifications.

Now, the age in which Fuller lived, was the golden age of 'quaintness' of all kinds;—in gardening, in architecture, in costume, in manners, in religion, in literature. As men improved external nature with a perverse expenditure of money and ingenuity—made her yews and cypresses grow into peacocks and statues—tortured and clipped her luxuriance into monotonous uniformity—turned her graceful curves and spirals into straight lines and parallelograms—compelled things incongruous to blend in artificial union, and then measured the merits of the work, not by the absurdity of the design, but by the difficulty of the execution;—so in literature, the curiously and elaborately unnatural was too often the sole object. Far-fetched allusions and strained similitudes, fantastic conceits and pedantic quotations the eternal

jingle of alliteration and antithesis, puns and quirks and verbal pleasantries of all kinds — these too often formed the choicest objects of the writer's ambition. The excellence of the product was judged, not by its intrinsic beauty, but by the labour it involved, and the ingenuity it displayed.

But while much of the 'quaint' literature of that age is now as little relished as the ruffs, wigs, and high-backed chairs of our great-great-grandfathers, there is not a little which will be held in everlasting remembrance. Not only are the works of powerful, although often perverted genius, full of thoughts, and images, and felicities of expression, which, being the offspring of truth and fancy, will be beautiful through all time; but the aspect in which the 'quaint' itself appears to us, will depend upon the character of the individual writer, and the nature of the subjects he treats. The constitution of Fuller's mind had such an affinity with the peculiarities of the day, that what was 'quaint' in others seems to have been his natural element — the sort of attire in which his active and eccentric genius loved to clothe itself. The habit which others perhaps slowly attained, and at length made (by those strong associations which can for a while sanctify any thing in taste or fashion) a second nature, seems to have cost him nothing. Allusions and images may appear odd, unaccountably odd, but in him they are evidently not far-fetched; they are spontaneously and readily presented by his teeming fancy: even his puns and alliterations seem the careless, irrepressible exuberances of a very sportive mind — not racked and tortured out of an unwilling brain, as is the case with so many of his contemporaries. We are aware, of course, that it is the office of a correct judgment to circumscribe the extravagances of the suggestive faculty, and to select from the materials it offers only what is in harmony with good taste. All we mean is, that in the case of Fuller, the suggestions, however eccentric, were spontaneous, not artificial, —

offered, not sought for. The water, however brackish or otherwise impure, still gushed from a natural spring, and was not brought up by the wheel and axle. His mind was a fountain, not a forcing-pump. Thus his very 'quaintness' is also 'nature'—nature in him, though it would not be so in others; and we therefore read his most outrageous extravagances with very different feelings from those with which we glance at the frigid conceits and dreary impertinences of many of his contemporaries. Nor do we simply feel indulgence towards them as spontaneous; their very spontaneity insures them an elasticity and vivacity of expression, which we should seek in vain in writers whose minds had less affinity with the genius of the day.

Nor are we to forget that there are certain *subjects* to which the 'quaint' style of those times is better adapted than to others; and in which it appears not destitute of a certain fantastic grace and fitness. We mean subjects in which little of passion or emotion would be expected. When conviction or persuasion is the object, and directness of purpose and earnestness of feeling are essential, we do not say to success, but merely to gain a hearing, nothing can be more repulsive, because nothing more *unnatural*, than the 'quaint' style;—nothing being more improbable than that far-fetched similitudes and laboured prettinesses should offer themselves to the mind at such a moment; except, indeed, where universal custom has made (as in the case of some of our forefathers) quaintness itself a second nature. When lachrymatories were the fashion, it might, for aught we can tell, have been easy for the ancient mourner to drop a tear into the little cruet at any given moment. But, ordinarily, nothing is more certain than that the very sight of such a receptacle would, as it was carried round to the company, instantly annihilate all emotion, even if it did not turn tears into laughter. Not less repellent, under ordinary circumstances, are all the forms of the 'quaint' when the object is to excite emotion, strong

or deep. But it is not so with certain other subjects, in which the 'quaint' itself is not without its recommendations. For example, in enforcing and illustrating moral maxims, in calmly inculcating lessons of life and manners, in depicting varieties of human character—in all which cases no continuous reasoning, no warmth of passion, is expected or required; the fancy may well be indulged in her most sportive and playful moods, and allowed to attire the sententious aphorisms she is commissioned to recommend, in any way that seems to her best. She may travel in any circuit, however wide, for her illustrations—may employ analogies, the very oddity of which shall ensure their being remembered—may lock up wisdom in any curious casket of antithesis or alliteration—nay, may not disdain even a quip or a pun, when these may serve to stimulate attention, or to aid the memory. The very best specimens of the quaint style, at all events, are on such themes. Such, to mention a single example, is Earle's 'Microcosmography;' such, also, are the best and most finished of Fuller's own writings—as his 'Profane and Holy State,' his 'Good Thoughts in Bad Times,' his 'Good Thoughts in Worse Times,' and his 'Mixed Contemplations.' The composition in such works often reminds us of some gorgeous piece of cabinet-work from China or India, in which ivory is richly inlaid with gems and gold. Though we may not think the materials always harmonious, or the shape perfectly consistent with our notions of elegance, we cannot fail to admire the richness of the whole product, and the costliness and elaboration of the workmanship.

We have said, that in many respects Fuller may be considered the master of the quaint school of the seventeenth century. It is by no means to be forgotten, however, that he is almost entirely free from many of the most offensive peculiarities of that school. As those qualities of quaintness he possesses in common with his contemporaries are, as already intimated,

natural to *him*, so from those which could hardly be natural in *any*, he is for the most part free. Thus he is almost wholly untainted by that vain pedantry, which so deeply infects the style of many of the greatest writers of his age; more especially Burton, Jeremy Taylor, Donne, and Browne. His quotations are very rare, and generally very apt, introduced for use, not ostentation. You nowhere find that curious mosaic work of different tongues, which is so common in the pages of Burton and Taylor. You never find him, as you do this last writer, enforcing some common-place of moral wisdom by half-a-dozen quotations from different writers, as though afraid to allow even a truism to walk abroad, except under the guard of some venerable names; or as though men would not believe their own senses, unless they had the authority of antiquity for doing so. From all the forms of learned pedantry, Fuller may be pronounced almost entirely free. His reading was various, and his learning great; though not to be compared to those of the above writers, whose powers, vast as they were, often sank beneath the load of their more prodigious erudition.

Fuller's style is also free, to a great extent, from the Latinisms which form so large an element in that of many of his great contemporaries. Both in style and diction, he is much more idiomatic than most of them. The structure of his sentences is far less involved and periodic, while his words are in much larger proportion of Saxon derivation. Something may, no doubt, be attributed to the character of his mind; his shrewd practical sense leading him, as it generally leads those who are strongly characterised by it, to prefer the homely and universally intelligible in point of expression. Still more, however, is to be attributed to the habits of his life. He was not the learned recluse which many of his contemporaries were, and neither read nor wrote half so much in the learned tongues. He loved to gossip with the common

people; and when collecting materials for his historical works, would listen, we are told, for hours together, to their prolix accounts of local traditions and family legends. Many, very many of the good old English words now lost, may be found in his writings. One passage of vigorous idiomatic English, and which is, in many other respects, a striking exemplification of Fuller's manner, we cannot refrain from quoting. It is from his 'Essay on Tombs:'

'Tombs are the clothes of the dead. A grave is but a plain suit, and a rich monument is one embroidered. Most moderate men have been careful for the decent interment of their corpses; . . . . both hereby to prevent the negligence of heirs, and to mind him of his mortality. Virgil tells us, that when bees swarm in the air, and two armies, meeting together, fight as it were a set battle with great violence — cast but a little dust upon them, and they will be quiet: —

"Hi motus animorum, atque hæc certamina tanta,
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescunt."

'Thus the most ambitious motions and thoughts of man's mind are quickly quelled when dust is thrown on him, whereof his fore-prepared sepulchre is an excellent remembrancer. Yet some seem to have built their tombs, therein to bury their thoughts of dying; never thinking thereof, but embracing the world with greater greediness. A gentleman made choice of a fair stone, and, intending the same for his gravestone, caused it to be pitched up in a field a pretty distance from his house, and used often to shoot at it for his exercise. "Yea, but," said a wag that stood by, "you would be loath, sir, to hit the mark." And so are many unwilling to die, who, notwithstanding, have erected their monuments.

'Tombs ought, in some sort, to be proportioned, not to the wealth, but deserts of the party interred. Yet, may we see some rich man of mean worth, loaden under a tomb big enough for a prince to bear. There were officers appointed in the Grecian games, who always, by public authority, did pluck down the statues erected to the victors, if they exceeded the true symmetry and proportion of their bodies.

'The shortest, plainest, and truest epitaphs are best.—I say, "the shortest;" for when a passenger sees a chronicle written on a tomb, he takes it on trust some great man lies there buried, without taking pains to examine who he is. Mr. Camden, in his "Remains," presents us with examples of great men that had

little epitaphs. And when once I asked a witty gentleman, an honoured friend of mine, what epitaph was fittest to be written on Mr. Camden's tomb—"Let it be," said he, "'Camden's Remains.'" I say also, "the plainest;" for except the sense lie above ground, few will trouble themselves to dig for it. Lastly, it must be "true;" not as in some monuments, where the red veins in the marble may seem to blush at the falsehoods written on it. He was a witty man that first taught a stone to speak, but he was a wicked man that taught it first to lie.

'To want a grave is the cruelty of the living, not the misery of the dead. An English gentleman, not long since, did lie on his death-bed in Spain, and the Jesuits did flock about him to pervert him to their religion. All was in vain. Their last argument was, "If you will not turn Roman Catholic, then your body shall be unburied." "Then," answered he, "I will stink;" and so turned his head and died. Thus love, if not to the dead, to the living, will make him, if not a grave, a hole. . . . . A good memory is the best monument. Others are subject to casualty and time; and we know that the pyramids themselves, doting with age, have forgotten the names of their founders. To conclude; let us be careful to provide rest for our souls, and our bodies will provide rest for themselves. And let us not be herein like unto gentlewomen, who care not to keep the inside of the orange, but candy and preserve only the outside thereof.'

One other Essay, which is not only a fine specimen of Fuller's best manner, but is full of sound practical criticism, we cannot resist the temptation to cite. It is on 'Fancy:'—

'Fancy is an inward sense of the soul, for a while retaining and examining things brought in thither by the common sense. It is the most boundless and restless faculty of the soul; for, whilst the understanding and the will are kept as it were *in liberâ custodiâ* to their objects of *verum et bonum*, the fancy is free from all engagements. It digs without spade, sails without ship, flies without wings, builds without charges, fights without bloodshed; in a moment striding from the centre to the circumference of the world, by a kind of omnipotency creating and annihilating things in an instant; and things divorced in nature are married in fancy, as in a lawful place. It is also most restless; whilst the senses are bound, and reason in a manner asleep, fancy, like a sentinel, walks the round, ever working, never wearied.

'The chief diseases of the fancy are either, that it is too wild and high-soaring, or else too low and grovelling, or else too desultory and over-voluble.

'Of the first:—If thy fancy be but a little too rank, age itself will correct it. To lift too high is no fault in a young horse; because, with travelling, he will mend it, for his own ease. Thus, lofty fancies in young men will come down of themselves; and, in process of time, the overplus will shrink to be but even measure. But if this will not do it, then observe these rules:—

'Take part always with thy judgment against thy fancy, in any thing wherein they shall dissent. If thou suspectest thy conceits too luxuriant, herein account thy suspicion a legal conviction, and damn whatsoever thou doubtest of. Warily Tully:—*Benè monent, qui vetant quicquam facere de quo dubitas, æquum sit an iniquum.*

'Take the advice of a faithful friend, and submit thy inventions to his censure. When thou pennest an oration, let him have the power of *Index Expurgatorius*, to expunge what he pleaseth; and do not thou, like a fond mother, cry if the child of thy brain be corrected for playing the wanton. Mark the arguments and reasons of his alterations—why that phrase least proper, this passage more cautious and advised; and, after a while, thou shalt perform the place in thine own person, and not go out of thyself for a censurer.

'If thy fancy be too low and humble, let thy judgment be king, but not tyrant, over it, to condemn harmless, yea commendable conceits. Some, for fear their orations should giggle, will not let them smile. Give it also liberty to rove, for it will not be extravagant. There is no danger that weak folks, if they walk abroad, will straggle far, as wanting strength.

'Acquaint thyself with reading poets, for there fancy is in her throne; and, in time, the sparks of the author's wit will catch hold on the reader, and inflame him with love, liking, and desire of imitation. I confess there is more required to teach one to write than to see a copy. However, there is a secret force of fascination in reading poems, to raise and provoke fancy.

'If thy fancy be over-voluble, then whip this vagrant home to the first object whereon it should be settled. Indeed, nimbleness is the perfection of this faculty, but levity the bane of it. Great is the difference betwixt a swift horse, and a skittish that will stand on no ground. Such is the ubiquitary fancy, which will keep long residence on no one subject, but is so courteous to strangers, that it ever welcomes that conceit most which comes last, and new species supplant the old ones, before seriously considered. If this be the fault of thy fancy, I say, whip it home to the first object whereon it should be settled. This do as often as occasion requires, and by degrees the fugitive servant will learn to abide by his work without running away.

'Acquaint thyself by degrees with hard and knotty studies—

as school-divinity, which will clog thy over-nimble fancy. True at the first, it will be as welcome to thee as a prison, and their very solutions will seem knots unto thee. But take not too much at once, lest thy brain turn edge. Taste it first as a potion for physic; and by degrees thou shalt drink it as beer for thirst: practice will make it pleasant. Mathematics are also good for this purpose; if beginning to try a conclusion, thou must make an end, lest thou losest thy pains that are past, and must proceed seriously and exactly. I meddle not with those Bedlam fancies, all whose conceits are antics; but leave them for the physicians to purge with hellebore.

'To clothe low creeping matter with high-flown language is not fine fancy, but flat foolery. It rather loads than raises a wren, to fasten the feathers of an ostrich to her wings. Some men's speeches are like the high mountains in Ireland, having a dirty bog in the top of them; the very ridge of them in high words having nothing of worth, but what rather stalls than delights the auditor.

'Fine fancies in manufactures invent engines rather pretty than useful. And, commonly, one trade is too narrow for them. They are better to project new ways than to prosecute old, and are rather skilful in many mysteries than thriving in one. They affect not voluminous inventions, wherein many years must constantly be spent to perfect them, except there be in them variety of pleasant employment.

'Imagination (the work of the fancy) hath produced real effects. Many serious and sad examples hereof may be produced. I will only insist on a merry one. A gentleman having led a company of children beyond their usual journey, they began to be weary, and jointly cried to him to carry them; which, because of their multitude, he could not do, but told them he would provide them horses to ride on. Then cutting little wands out of the hedge as nags for them, and a great stake as a gelding for himself, thus mounted, fancy put mettle into their legs, and they came cheerfully home.

'Fancy runs most furiously when a guilty conscience drives it. One that owed much money, and had many creditors, as he walked London streets in the evening, a tenter-hook caught his cloak. "At whose suit?" said he, conceiving some bailiff had arrested him. Thus guilty consciences are afraid where no fear is, and count every creature they meet a sergeant sent from God to punish them.'

The *historical* works of Fuller are simply a caricature of the species of composition to which they professedly belong; a systematic violation of all its

proprieties. The gravity and dignity of the historic muse are habitually violated by him. Nay more; not only is he continually cracking his jokes, and perpetrating his puns; his matter is as full of treason against the laws of history as his manner. His very method—if we may be allowed such an abuse of language—consists in a contempt of all method. He has so constructed his works as to secure himself the indulgence of perpetual digression—of harbouring and protecting every vagrant story that may ask shelter in his pages—of rambling hither and thither, as the fit takes him—and of introducing all sorts of things where, when, and how, he pleases. To this end he has cut up his 'Histories' into little paragraphs or sections, which often have as little connexion with one another as with the general subject. Any curious fact, any anecdote, is sufficient warrant in his opinion for a digression; provided only it has any conceivable relation to the events he happens to be narrating. A mere chronological connexion is always deemed enough to justify him in bringing the most diverse matters into juxtaposition; while the little spaces which divide his sections from one another, like the little compartments in a cabinet of curiosities, are thought sufficient lines of demarcation between the oddest incongruities. His 'Worthies of England' is in fact a rambling tour over the English Counties taken in alphabetical order, in which, though his chief object undoubtedly is to give an account of the principal families resident in each, and of the illustrious men they have severally produced, he cannot refrain from thrusting in a world of gossip on their natural history and geography; on their productions, laws, customs, and proverbs. It may be said that this was an unfinished work; that we have not the fabric itself, but only the bricks and mortar of which it was to be constructed. We reply that the general plan is sufficiently disclosed, and could not have been materially altered had the author lived to complete the work. But is his 'Church History' a

whit better in this respect? Never was there such a medley. First, each book and section is introduced by a quaint dedication to one or other of his many admirers or patrons. Nicholson in his 'English Historical Library' is rather severe on his motives for such a multiplication of dedications. Secondly, the several paragraphs into which the 'Church History' is divided, (most of them introduced by some quaint title,) are many of them as little connected with church history as with the history of China. Thus, in one short 'section,' comprising the period from 1330 to 1361, we find 'paragraphs' relating to 'the ignorance of the English in curious clothing'—to 'fuller's earth,' which, he tells us, 'was a precious commodity'—to the manufacture of 'woollen cloth,' and to the sumptuary laws which 'restrained excess in apparel.'

Here is a strange mixture in one short chapter! Church history, as all the world knows, is compelled to treat of matters which have a very remote relation to the church of Christ; but who could have suspected that it could by possibility take cognisance of fuller's earth and woollens? Even Fuller himself seems a little astonished at his own hardihood; and lest any should *at first sight* fail to see the perfect congruity of such topics, he engages, with matchless effrontery, to show the connexion between them. His reasons are so very absurd, and given so much in his own manner, that we cannot refrain from citing them. 'But enough of this subject, which let none condemn for a deviation from church history. First, because it would not grieve me to go a *little* out of the way, if the way be good, as the digression is, for the credit and profit of our country. Secondly, it reductively belongeth to the church history, seeing many poor people, both young and old, formerly charging the parishes (as appeared by the account of the church officers) were hereby enabled to maintain themselves!!'

It may well be supposed, after what has been said, that his 'Histories' are not to be judged by the ordinary rules applied to that class of compositions. They possess intrinsic value only as collections and repertories of materials for other and less eccentric writers. In this point of view he often modestly represents them; and in fact, as we conjecture, for the very purpose of securing the larger licence of rambling. The praise of method and regularity (if indeed he formed any notion of these) he coveted little, compared with the free indulgence of his vagrant and gossiping humour. He loved, like Edie Ochiltree, 'to daunder along the green lanes,' to leave the dusty high road of continuous history, and solace himself in every 'bypath meadow' that invited his feet by its softness and verdure. Even as a collector of materials, his merits have been strongly called in question by Bishop Nicholson. 'Through the whole of his "Church History,"' says the critic, 'he is so fond of his own wit, that he does not seem to have minded what he was about. The gravity of an historian (much more of an ecclesiastical one) requires a far greater care, both of the matter and style of his work, than is here to be met with. If a pretty story comes in his way that affords scope for clinch and droll, off it goes with all the gaiety of the stage, without staying to inquire whether it have any foundation in truth or not; and even the most serious and authentic parts of it are so interlaced with pun and quibble, that it looks as if the man had designed to ridicule the annals of our church into fable and romance. Yet if it were possible to refine it well, the work would be of good use, since there are in it some things of moment hardly to be had elsewhere, which may often illustrate dark passages in more serious writers. These are not to be despised where his authorities are cited, and appear credible. But in other matters, where he is singular, and without his vouchers, *μεμνησο απιστειν.*'

That Fuller has intermingled a great deal of gossip and rubbish with his facts, is indeed most true; but then, usually, he neither receives such matter for truth himself, nor delivers it for truth to others; so that the worst that can be said of him on that score is, that he is content to merge his historic character in that of a retailer of amusing oddities. But that he is careless in the admission or investigation of facts, we cannot admit, without better proof than Nicholson has furnished; and we much fear that the censure of the critic was excited rather by Fuller's candour, than by either his partiality or his negligence. If he had been a more thorough partisan, and on the side of his censor, we should have been spared some of the indignation of this 'historian' of 'historians.' With indolence in his researches, at all events, Fuller cannot be justly taxed. Frequently compelled, in his capacity of chaplain to the royal army, to change his quarters, often writing without the advantage of books and access to documents, it was impossible that he should not fall into serious errors; but he diligently availed himself of such resources as were within his reach. As already intimated, he would spend hours in patiently listening to the long-winded recitals of rustic ignorance, in hopes of gleaning some neglected tradition, or of rescuing some half-forgotten fact from oblivion. His works everywhere disclose the true antiquarian spirit, the genuine veneration for whatever bears the 'charming rust,' or exhales the musty odour of age; and it is plain, that if his opportunities had been equal either to his inclinations or his aptitudes, he would have been no mean proficient in the arts of spelling out and piecing the mouldering records of antiquity — of deciphering documents — of adjusting dates — of investigating the origin of old customs, and the etymology of old names — of interpreting proverbial sayings — of sifting the *residuum* of truth in obscure tradition, and of showing the manner in which facts have passed into fable. Like many men of the

same stamp, however, he had not the faculty of discriminating the relative value of the facts thus elicited; but frequently exhibits the most insignificant with as much prominence as the most valuable: like them, too, he often mistakes probability for demonstration, and magnifies conjecture into certainty. In some respects he bore a sort of resemblance (though in others how different!) to Herodotus and Froissart. The charm of continuous narrative, indeed, for which they are so justly eminent, he possessed not; still less the happy art of a picturesque and graceful disposition of his materials. But in his diligent heed to traditional stories, in the personal pains and labour which he was willing to take in the accumulation of his materials, in the eagerness and the patience with which he prosecuted the chase, in the large infusion of merely curious and amusing matter amongst the sober verities of history, by which his 'Worthies' and his 'Church History' are equally marked, there is some resemblance. The traditions, and 'the reports,' and the 'sayings,' of the common people, were as dear to him as was the ὡς λεγουσι to the father of history. Like the above writers, too, he usually lets us know for what he vouches, and what he gives on the report of others; and we believe that, as in their case, his principal statements will be found more nearly true the more they are investigated. But, after all, his professedly historical works are not to be read as *histories;* their strange want of method, the odd intermixture of incongruous and irrelevant matter they contain, and the eccentricities of all kinds with which they abound, will for ever prevent that. They are rather books of amusement; in which wisdom and whim, important facts and impertinent fables, solid reflections and quaint drolleries, refined wit and wretched puns, great beauties and great negligences, are mingled in equal proportions. Perused as books of amusement, there are few in the English language which a man, with the slightest tincture of love for our early literature,

can take up with a keener relish ; while an enthusiast, whether by natural predisposition or acquired habit, will, like Charles Lamb, absolutely riot in their wild luxuriance.

Faulty as Fuller's Histories are, it will be seen that he yet possessed in great perfection many of the most essential conditions of excellence in that department of composition. His spirit of research, his love of minute investigation, his fine imagination, his boundless vivacity, his freedom from prejudice, his liberality and candour, would seem to have ensured success ; and that success would doubtless have been eminent, had he not given such licence to his inordinate wit, so freely indulged his oddities of manner, and set all method at defiance. These defects have gone far to neutralise his other admirable qualifications for historical composition ; and what was absurdly said of Shakspeare, might with some propriety be said of him, 'that a *pun* was the Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.'

In a moral and religious point of view, the character of Fuller is entitled to our veneration, and is altogether one of the most attractive and interesting which that age exhibits to us. His buoyant temper, and his perpetual mirthfulness, were wholly at variance with that austerity and rigour which characterised so many of the religionists of his time ; but his life and conduct bore ample testimony that he possessed genuine and habitual piety. Amidst all his levity of manner, there was still the gravity of the heart — deep veneration for all things sacred ; and while his wit clothed even his religious thoughts and feelings with irresistible pleasantry, his manner is as different from that of the scorner, as the innocent laugh of childhood from the malignant chuckle of a demon. In all the relations of domestic and social life, his conduct was most exemplary. In one point, especially, does he appear in honourable contrast with the bigots of all parties in that age of strife — he

had learnt, partly from his natural benevolence, and partly from a higher principle, the lessons of 'that charity which thinketh no evil,' and which so few of his contemporaries knew how to practise. His very moderation, however, as is usually the case, made him suspected by the zealots of both parties. Though a sincere friend of the Church of England, he looked with sorrow (which in his 'Church History' he took no pains to disguise) on the severities practised towards the Puritans; and everywhere adopts the tone of apology for their supposed errors, and of compassion for their undoubted sufferings. His candour and impartiality in treating some of the most delicate portions of our ecclesiastical history—as for example, the Hampton Court controversy, and the administration of Laud—are in admirable contrast with the resolute spirit of partisanship which has inspired so many of the writers of the Church of England. There were not wanting persons, however, who, as we have seen, insinuated that his candour in these and other instances was nothing but a peace-offering to the men in power at the time he published his 'Church History.' But not to urge that he has said too much on the other side to justify such a supposition, his whole manner is that of an honest man, striving to be impartial, even if not always successful. Had he been the unprincipled timeserver this calumny would represent him, he would have suppressed a little more. Coleridge says that he was 'incomparably the most sensible, the least prejudiced, great man of an age that boasted a galaxy of great men.' If this statement be confined to 'religious prejudices,' there are, it must be confessed, few of his age who can be compared with him. As to prejudices of other kinds, he seems to have shared in those of most of his contemporaries. It is hard, or rather impossible, to be wholly beyond one's age. He believed in witches; he was a resolute stickler for the royal prerogative of curing the king's

evil; though whether his loyalty or philosophy had most to do with his convictions on that point, may well admit of doubt. It is true that he treats the idle legends and fabled miracles of Romish superstition, with sovereign contempt; but then his Protestantism came to the aid of his reason, and, considering the superstitions he has himself retained, the former may be fairly supposed to have offered the more powerful logic of the two.

Though Fuller cannot be accused of sharing the bigotry and bitterness of his age, he is by no means perfectly free from a very opposite vice with which that age was nearly as chargeable — we mean flattery. His multitudinous dedications to his numerous patrons, contained in the 'Church History,' are, many of them, very striking, and even beautiful compositions, and full of ingenious turns of thought; but they certainly attribute as much of excellence to the objects of them, as either history, or tradition, or charity can warrant us in ascribing. Something may, however, be pardoned to the spirit of the age, and something to the gratitude or necessities of the author. But that any author, even a hungry one, could be brought to write them, is a wonder; that any patron could, either with or without a blush, appropriate them, is a still greater one. It is in the conclusion to his character of the 'Good King,' in his 'Holy State,' that our author has fallen most unworthily into the complimentary extravagance of the times. He, of course, makes the reigning monarch the reality of the fair picture, and draws his character in language which truth might well interpret into the severest irony.

It would be improper to close this analysis of one of the most singular intellects that ever appeared in the world of letters, without saying a word or two of the prodigies related of his powers of memory. That he had a very tenacious one, may easily be credited, though some of its traditional feats almost pass belief.

It is said that he could 'repeat five hundred strange words after once hearing them, and could make use of a sermon *verbatim*, under the like circumstances.' Still further, it is said that he undertook, in passing from Temple Bar to the extremity of Cheapside, to tell, at his return, every sign as it stood in order on both sides of the way, (repeating them either backwards or forwards), and that he performed the task exactly. This is pretty well, considering that in that day every shop had its sign. The interpretation of such hyperboles, however, is very easy; they signify, at all events, thus much—that he had an extraordinary memory. That many of the reports respecting it were false or exaggerated, may be gathered from an amusing anecdote recorded by himself. 'None alive,' says he, 'ever heard me pretend to the *art* of memory, who, in my book, (*Holy State*,) have decried it as a trick, no art; and, indeed, is more of fancy than memory. I confess, some ten years since, when I came out of the pulpit of St. Dunstan's East, one (who since wrote a book thereof) told me in the vestry before credible people, that he, in Sydney College, had taught me *the art of memory*. I returned unto him, *that it was not so*, for *I* could not remember *that I had ever seen him before!* which, I conceive, was a real refutation.'

One is prepared to meet with all sorts of oddities of manner about such a man; for it would be strange that a person so eccentric in all his writings, should not have been eccentric in his private habits; but really the following account of his method of composition passes belief. It is said that he was in 'the habit of writing the first words of every line near the margin down to the foot of the paper, and, that then beginning again, he filled up the vacuities exactly, without spaces, interlineations, or contractions;' and that he 'would so connect the ends and beginnings that the sense would appear as complete as if it had been written in a continued series, after the ordinary

manner.' This, we presume, is designed to be a compliment to the ease with which he performed the process of mental composition, and the accuracy with which his memory could transfer what he had meditated to paper. But though he might occasionally perform such a feat for the amusement of his friends, it never could have been his ordinary practice.

As we quoted, at the commencement of this essay, the opinion entertained of our author by Coleridge, we shall conclude it by citing that of Charles Lamb, than whom there could not be a more competent judge. 'The writings of Fuller,' says he, 'are usually designated by the title of quaint, and with sufficient reason; for such was his natural bias to conceits that I doubt not, upon most occasions, it would have been going out of his way to have expressed himself out of them. But his wit is not always *lumen siccum*, a dry faculty of surprising; on the contrary, his conceits are oftentimes deeply steeped in human feeling and passion. Above all, his way of telling a story, for its eager liveliness, and the perpetual running commentary of the narrator, happily blended with the narration, is perhaps unequalled.' *

* Since the preceding essay was published, have appeared 'Memorials of the Life and Works' of Fuller, by Rev. Arthur T. Russell, B.C.L. In that volume, all that either history or tradition has left respecting our author has been laboriously and faithfully compiled; and thither the reader, curious about the biography of this eccentric genius, is referred for more minute information than could be given in the sketch at the commencement of this essay.

ANDREW MARVELL.*

ANDREW MARVELL was a native of Kingston-upon-Hull, where he was born Nov. 15. 1620. His father, of the same name, was master of the grammar-school, and lecturer of Trinity Church in that town. He is described by Fuller and Echard as 'facetious,' so that his son's wit, it would appear, was hereditary. He is also said to have displayed considerable eloquence in the pulpit; and even to have excelled in that kind of oratory which would seem at first sight least allied to a mirthful temperament — that is, the *pathetic*. The conjunction, however, of keen wit and deep sensibility has been found in a far greater number of instances than would at first sight be imagined; as might be easily proved by examples, if this were the place for it. Nor would it be difficult to give the *rationale* of the fact. Each has its natural affinities with genius, and both very generally accompany it.

The diligence of Mr. Marvell's pulpit preparations has been celebrated by Fuller in his 'Worthies,' with characteristic quaintness. 'He was a most excellent preacher,' says he, 'who never broached what he had new brewed, but preached what he had pre-studied some competent time before, insomuch that he was wont to say, that he would cross the common proverb, which called Saturday the working day and Monday

* 'Edinburgh Review,' Jan. 1844.

The Life of Andrew Marvell, the celebrated Patriot; with Extracts and Selections from his Prose and Poetical Works. By JOHN DOVE. 12mo. London: 1832.

the holiday of preachers.' The eloquence of the pulpit he enforced by the more persuasive eloquence of a consistent life. During the pestilential epidemic of 1637, we are told that he distinguished himself by an intrepid discharge of his pastoral functions.

Having given early indications of superior talents, young Andrew was sent, when not quite fifteen years of age, to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was partly or wholly maintained by an exhibition from his native town. He had not been long there, when, like Chillingworth, he was ensnared by the proselyting arts of the Jesuits; who, with subtlety equal to their zeal, commissioned their emissaries specially to aim at the conversion of such of the university youths as gave indications of signal ability. It appears that he was inveigled from college to London. Having been tracked thither by his father, he was discovered after some months in a bookseller's shop, and restored to the university; where, during the two succeeding years, he pursued his studies with diligence. About this period he lost his father under circumstances worth relating.

The death of this good man forms one of those little domestic tragedies—not infrequent in real life—to which imagination itself can scarcely add one touching incident, and which are as affecting as any that fiction can furnish. It appears that on the other side of the Humber lived a lady (an intimate friend of Marvell's father) who had an only daughter, equally lovely and beloved. This idol her mother could scarcely bear to be out of her sight. On one occasion, however, she yielded to the importunity of Mr. Marvell, and suffered her daughter to cross the water to Hull, to be present at the baptism of one of his children. The day after the ceremony the young lady was to return. The weather was tempestuous, and on reaching the river's side, accompanied by Mr. Marvell, the boatmen endeavoured to dissuade her from attempting the passage. But, afraid of alarming her

mother by prolonging her absence, she persisted. Mr. Marvell added his importunities to the arguments of the boatmen, but in vain. Finding her inflexible, he told her that as she had incurred this peril for his sake, he felt himself 'bound in honour and conscience' not to desert her; and, having prevailed on some boatmen to hazard the passage, they embarked together. As they were putting off, he flung his gold-headed cane on shore, and told the spectators that, in case he should never return, it was to be given his son, with the injunction 'to remember his father.' The boat was upset and both were lost.

As soon as the mother had a little recovered the shock, she sent for the orphan, intimated her intention to provide for his education, and at her death left him all she possessed.

One of his biographers informs us that young Marvell took his degree of B. A. in the year 1638, and was admitted to a scholarship.* If so, he did not retain it very long. Though in no further danger from the Jesuits, he seems to have been beset by more formidable enemies in his own bosom. Either from too early becoming his own master, or from being betrayed into follies to which his lively temperament and social qualities peculiarly exposed him, he became negligent of his studies; and having absented himself from certain 'exercises,' and otherwise been guilty of sundry unacademic irregularities, he, with four others, was adjudged by the master and seniors unworthy of 'receiving any further benefit from the college,' unless they showed just cause to the contrary within three months. The required vindication does not appear to have been found, or at all events was never offered. The record of this transaction bears date September 24. 1641.

Soon after this, probably at the commencement of 1642, Marvell seems to have set out on his travels, in

* Cooke, in the Life prefixed to Marvell's Poems. 1726.

the course of which he visited a great part of Europe. At Rome he stayed a considerable time, where Milton was then residing, and where, in all probability, their lifelong friendship commenced. With an intrepidity, characteristic of both, it is said they openly argued against the superstitions of Rome within the precincts of the Vatican. It was here, also, that Marvell made the first essay of his satirical powers in a lampoon on Richard Flecknoe. It is now remembered only as having suggested the more effective satire of Dryden on the laureate Shadwell. At Paris he made another attempt at satire in Latin, of about the same order of merit. The subject of it was an abbé named Lancelot Joseph de Maniban, who professed to interpret the characters and prognosticate the fortunes of strangers by an inspection of their handwriting.

After this we have no trace whatever of Marvell for some years; and his biographers have, as usual, endeavoured to supply the deficiency by conjecture — some of them so idly, that they have made him secretary to an embassy which had then no existence.

Mr. Dove* says, that this lack of information re-

* We gladly admit that Mr. Dove's little volume is a tolerably full and accurate compilation of what is known to us of Andrew Marvell's history, and contains some pleasant extracts from his writings. But we must express our regret that he has been, in a trifling degree, misled, by adhering too literally to the etymology of the word 'compilation.' It is true that 'compilation' comes from *compilatio*, and equally true that *compilatio* means 'pillage;' but it does not follow that 'compilation' is to be literally 'pillage.' A considerable number of sentences, sometimes whole paragraphs, are transferred from Mr. D'Israeli's Miscellanies, and from two articles on Andrew Marvell which appeared in the 'Retrospective Review' some twenty years ago, without alteration, and without any sort of acknowledgment. Had they been printed between inverted commas, and the sources specified, we should have called it 'compilation,' but no 'pillage;' as it is we must call it pillage, and not compilation. Mr. Dove may, it is true, have been the author of the articles in question. If so, there was no conceivable reason why he should

specting Marvell extends over eleven years — not quite, however, even on his own showing; for the very next record he supplies, tells us at least how the first four years of this period were spent, and a considerable though indeterminate portion at the close of it. The record referred to is a recommendatory letter of Milton to Bradshaw, dated Feb. 21. 1652. It appears that Marvell was then an unsuccessful candidate for the office of assistant Latin secretary. In this letter, after describing Marvell as a man of 'singular desert,' both from 'report' and personal 'converse,' he proceeds to say — 'He hath spent four years abroad in Holland, France, Italy, and Spain, to very good purpose, as I believe, and the gaining of those four languages; besides, he is a scholar, and well read in the Latin and Greek authors, and no doubt of an approved conversation; *for he comes now lately out of the house of the Lord Fairfax, where he was entrusted to give some instructions in the languages to the lady, his daughter.*' Milton concludes the letter with a sentence which fully discloses the very high estimate he had formed of Marvell's abilities — 'This, my lord, I write sincerely, without any other end than to perform my duty to the public in helping them to an humble servant; laying aside those jealousies and that emulation which mine own condition might suggest to me by bringing in *such a coadjutor.*'

In the following year, 1653, Marvell was appointed tutor to Cromwell's nephew, Mr. Dutton. Shortly after receiving his charge, he addressed a letter to the Protector, from which we extract one or two sentences characteristic of his caution, good sense, and conscientiousness. 'I have taken care,' says he, speaking of his pupil, 'to examine him several times in the presence of Mr. Oxenbridge, as those who weigh and tell

not have owned them; and we can only regret that he has omitted to do it. If not, we cannot justify the use he has made of them.

over money before some witness ere they take charge of it; for I thought there might be possibly some lightness in the coin, or error in the telling, which hereafter I should be bound to make good.' . . . . . 'He is of a gentle and waxen disposition; and God be praised, I cannot say he hath brought with him any evil impression, and I shall hope to set nothing into his spirit but what may be of a good sculpture. He hath in him two things that make youth most easy to be managed — modesty, which is the bridle to vice — and emulation, which is the spur to virtue. . . . . Above all, I shall labour to make him sensible of his duty to God; for then we begin to serve faithfully when we consider He is our master.'

On the publication of Milton's second 'Defence,' Marvell was commissioned to present it to the Protector. After doing so, he addressed a letter of compliment to Milton, the terms of which evince the natural admiration with which his illustrious friend had inspired him. His eulogy of the 'Defence' is as emphatic as that of the Paradise Lost, in the well-known recommendatory lines prefixed to most editions of that poem.

In 1657, Marvell entered upon his duties as assistant Latin secretary with Milton; Cromwell died in the following year; and from this period till the Parliament of 1660, there is no further trace of him. We have seen it affirmed that he became member for Hull in 1658. But this is not true, and would be at variance with the statement in his epitaph, where it is said that he had occupied that post nearly twenty years. Had he been first elected in 1658, he would have been member somewhat more than that period.

During his long parliamentary career, Marvell maintained a close correspondence with his constituents — regularly sending to them, almost every post night during the sittings of Parliament, an account of its proceedings. These letters were first made public

by Captain Thompson, and occupy about four hundred pages of the first volume of his edition of Marvell's works. They are written with great plainness, and with a business-like brevity, which must have satisfied, we should think, even the most laconic of his merchant constituents. They are chiefly valuable now, as affording proofs of the ability and fidelity with which their author discharged his public duties; and as throwing light on some curious points of parliamentary usage and history. Some few sentences, interesting on these accounts, may be worth extracting. Of his diligence, the copiousness and punctuality of the correspondence itself are themselves the best proofs; but many of the letters incidentally disclose others not less significant. The following evidence of it, few members now-a-days would be disposed to give, and no constituency, we should imagine, would be unreasonable enough to expect:—'Sir, I must beg your excuse for paper, pens, writing, and everything; for really I have by ill-chance neither eat nor drank from yesterday at noon till six o'clock to-night, that the House rose.'* And again—'Really the business of the House hath been of late so earnest daily, and so long, that I have not had the time and scarce vigour left me, by night, to write to you; and to-day, because I would not omit any longer, I lose my dinner to make sure of this letter.'† On another occasion he says—"'Tis nine at night, and we are but just now risen; and I write these few words in the post-house, for sureness that my letter be not too late.'‡ In one letter we find him saying—'I am something bound up, that I cannot write about your public affairs; but I assure you they *break my sleep.*'§

Of his minute attention to all their local interests, and his vigilant care over them, these letters afford ample proof; and in this respect are not unworthy of

* Marvell's Letters, p. 302
† Ibid. p. 83.
‡ Ibid p. 106.
§ Ibid. p. 33.

the study of honourable members of the present day. He usually commences each session of Parliament by requesting his constituents to consider, whether there were any local affairs in which they might more particularly require his aid, and to give him timely notice of their wishes. His prudence is conspicuous in his abstinence from any dangerous comments on public affairs; he usually contents himself with detailing bare facts. This caution was absolutely necessary at a period when the officials of the Post-office made no scruple of breaking the seal of private correspondence for the purpose of obtaining information for the Government. On one occasion this seems to have been done in his own case. He tells his constituents that a letter of his had been shown about town: they, in a very complimentary reply, vehemently disclaim all knowledge of any breach of trust. In acknowledging this letter, he says—'I am very well satisfied, gentlemen, by your latter, that it was none of you; but it seems, therefore, that there is *some sentinel set both upon you and upon me*, and to know it therefore is a sufficient caution: the best of it is, that none of us, I believe, either do say or write any thing, but what we care not though it be made public, although we do not desire it.'* He, notwithstanding, repeatedly admonishes them not to let his letters be seen by any but themselves. In this respect, there is a striking yet perfectly natural contrast between the cautious statements of facts in his public correspondence, and the lively comments upon them in his private letters; in which his indignant patriotism expresses itself with characteristic severity against the corruptions of the court. Thus, in a letter to a friend in Persia, we find the following memorable passage—'Now, after my usual method, leaving to others what relates to business, I address myself, which is all that I am good for, to be your gazetteer.

* Marvell's Letters, p. 262.

The King having, upon pretence of the great preparations of his neighbours, demanded three hundred thousand pounds for his navy (though, in conclusion, he hath not set out any), and that the Parliament should pay his debts (which the ministers would never particularise to the House of Commons), our House gave several bills. You see how far things were stretched, though beyond reason, there being no satisfaction how those debts were contracted, and all men foreseeing that what was given would not be applied to discharge the debts, which I hear are at this day risen to four millions; but diverted as formerly. Nevertheless, such was the number of the constant courtiers increased by the apostate patriots, who were bought off for that turn — some at six, others ten, one at fifteen thousand pounds in money, besides what offices, lands, and reversions to others, that it *is a mercy they gave not away the whole land and liberty of England.*' *

In the same letter he thus speaks of the shamelessness with which the Parliament emulated the profligacy of the Court — prostituting its own and the nation's honour as vilely as the royal mistresses it enriched had prostituted theirs: — 'They have signed and sealed ten thousand pounds a-year more to the Duchess of Cleveland, who has likewise near ten thousand pounds a-year out of the new farm of the country excise of beer and ale, five thousand pounds a-year out of the Post-office, and, they say, the reversion of all the King's leases, the reversion of all places in the Custom-house, the green wax, and indeed what not? All promotions, spiritual and temporal, pass under her cognisance.'† On the King's unwelcome visits to the House of Peers, he says — 'Being sat, he told them it was a privilege he claimed from his ancestors to be present at their deliberations. That therefore they should not, for his coming, in-

* Marvell's Letters, p. 405. † Ibid. p. 406.

terrupt their debates, but proceed, and be covered. They did so. It is true that this has been done long ago; but it is now so old that it is new, and so disused that at any other but so bewitched a time as this, it would have been looked on as an high usurpation and breach of privilege. He indeed sat still, for the most part, and interposed very little, sometimes a word or two. . . . . After three or four days' continuance, the lords were very well-used to the King's presence, and sent the Lord Steward and Lord Chamberlain to him [to learn], when they might wait, as a House on him, to render their humble thanks for the honour he did them! The hour was appointed them, and they thanked him, and he took it well. So this matter, of such importance on all great occasions, seems riveted to them and us, for the future, and to all posterity. . . . . The King has ever since continued his session among them, and *says it is better than going to a play.*' *

Marvell's stainless probity and honour everywhere appear; and in no case more amiably than in the misunderstanding with his colleague, or 'his partner' as he calls him, Colonel Gilby, in 1661, and which seems to have arisen out of some electioneering proceedings. With such uncommon talents for ridicule as Marvell possessed, inferior men could not have resisted the temptation to indulge in some ebullition of witty malice. But his magnanimity was far superior to such mean retaliation. He is eager to do his opponent the amplest justice, and to put the fairest construction on his conduct. He is fearful only lest their private quarrel should be of the slightest detriment to the public service. He says — 'The bonds of civility betwixt Colonel Gilby and myself being unhappily snapped in pieces, and in such manner that I cannot see how it is possible ever to knit them again: the only trouble that I have is, lest by our mis-intelligence

* Marvell's Letters, p. 417—419.

your business should receive any disadvantage. . . . . Truly, I believe, that as to your public trust and the discharge thereof, we do each of us still retain the same principles upon which we first undertook it; and that, though perhaps we may sometimes differ in our advice concerning the way of proceeding, yet we have the same good ends in the general; and by this unlucky falling out, we shall be provoked to a greater emulation of serving you.' * Yet the offence, whatever it was, must have been a grave one, for we find him saying, at the conclusion of the same letter, — 'I would not tell you any tales, because there are nakednesses which it becomes us to cover, if it be possible; as I shall, unless I be obliged to make some vindications by any false report or misinterpretations. In the mean time, pity, I beseech you, my weakness; *for there are some things which men ought not, others that they cannot patiently suffer.*' †

Of his integrity even in little things — of his desire to keep his conscience pure and his reputation untarnished — we have also some striking proofs. On one occasion he had been employed by his constituents to wait on the Duke of Monmouth, then governor of Hull, with a complimentary letter, and to present him with a purse containing 'six broad pieces' as an honorary fee. He says, — 'He had, before I came in, as I was told, considered what to do with the gold; and but that I by all means prevented the offer, I had been in danger of being reimbursed with it.' ‡ In the same letter he says — 'I received the bill which was sent me on Mr. Nelehorpe; but the surplus of it exceeding much the expense I have been at on this occasion, I desire you to make use of it, and of me, upon any other opportunity.' § Few in those corrupt days were likely to be troubled with any such inconvenient scrupulosity.

* Marvell's Letters, p. 33, 34.
† Ibid. p. 36.
‡ Ibid. p. 210.
§ Ibid. p. 210.

In one of his letters appears the following declaration, which we have no doubt was perfectly sincere, and, what is still more strange, implicitly believed:— 'I shall, God willing, maintain the same incorrupt mind and clear conscience, free from faction or any self-ends, which I have, by his grace, hitherto preserved.'*

We have said that these letters are also interesting as incidentally illustrating parliamentary usage. Marvell was one of the last — if not the very last — who received the 'wages' which members were entitled by law to demand of their constituents. To this subject he makes some curious references. On more than one occasion it appears that members had sued their constituents for arrears of pay; while others had threatened to do so, unless the said constituents agreed to re-elect them at the next election! 'To-day,' says he in a letter dated March 3. 1676-7, 'Sir Harbottle Grimstone, Master of the Rolls, moved for a bill to be brought in, to indemnify all counties, cities, and boroughs for the *wages due to their members for the time past*, which was introduced by him upon very good reason; both because of the poverty of many people not able to supply so long an arrear, especially new taxes now coming upon them, and also because Sir John Shaw, the Recorder of Colchester, *had sued the town for his wages;* several other members also having, it seems, threatened their boroughs to do the same, unless *they should chuse them*, upon another election, to Parliament.'† The conditions of re-election are strangely altered now; it is no longer possible to drive so thrifty a bargain, or bribe after so ingenious a fashion. But these 'wages,' moderate as they were — only about two shillings a-day to a member of a borough, and to a county member four — were in some cases alleged to be so heavy a tax that instances occur of unpatriotic boroughs begging

* Marvell's Letters, p. 276. † Ibid. 289.

to be *disfranchised,* to escape the intolerable honour of sending members to Parliament! Nor was the reluctance always on one side. At early periods of our history, we have accounts of members who, notwithstanding this liberal pay— not much more than that of a hedger and ditcher in these more luxurious days — found the inconveniences of membership so great, and the honour in their unambitious estimate so small, that they shrank from representing a borough, as much as the borough from the dignity of being represented; and expressed their aversion with as much sincerity as ever primitive bishop, in times of persecution, cried '*Nolo episcopari.*' There are authentic cases on record, in which the candidates fairly ran away from the proffered dignity, and even resisted it *vi et armis.* Strange revolutions! one is ready to exclaim; — that a man should now be willing to spend a fortune even in the unsuccessful pursuit of an honour which his ancestors were reluctant to receive even when paid for it; and that constituencies should resist, as the last insult and degradation, that disfranchisement which many of them in ancient times would have been but too happy to accept as a privilege!

In such a state of things we can hardly wonder, that the attendance of members was not very prompt and punctual, or that great difficulty was often found in obtaining a full House. Severe penalties were threatened at various times against the absentees. In one letter, we are told, — 'The House was called yesterday, and gave defaulters a fortnight's time, by which, if they do not come up, they may expect the greatest severity.'* In another, — 'The House of Commons was taken up for the most part yesterday in calling over their House, and have ordered a letter to be drawn up from the Speaker to every

* Marvell's Letters, p. 117.

place for which there is any defaulter, to signify the absence of their member, and a solemn letter is accordingly preparing, to be signed by the Speaker. This is thought a sufficient punishment for *any modest man;* nevertheless, if they shall not come up hereupon, there is a further severity reserved.' *

More than once we find a proposition, that these absentees should be punished by being compelled to pay double proportions toward the interminable subsidies. One member proposed that the mulcts thus extorted from negligent or idle senators, should be exclusively employed in building a ship, to be called 'The Sinner's Frigate' — surely an ill-boding name, however applicable to such a vessel: —

'Built in the eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark.'

Though the law-makers of that age were paid at little more than the rate of a journeyman tailor of modern times, still it appears that their performances, if estimated by their value, were exorbitantly overpaid. When we see in Marvell's correspondence what were the occupations of the right honourable House — shamefully betraying the nation with whose interests they were entrusted — taxing the groaning people to support the royal profligacy — ingeniously contriving the most elaborate and comprehensive methods of national ruin, and pursuing the worst ends by the worst means — diminishing by their absurb enactments in relation to trade and commerce, that very revenue which was almost their sole object of solicitude — addressing the King, that he will be pleased to abstain from wearing one shred of foreign manufacture, and to discountenance the use of it in his subjects — bringing in bills that all nonconformists shall pay double taxes, and that all persons shall be buried in woollens 'for the next six or seven years;' —when we see them engaged with pernicious industry

* Marvell's Letters, p. 240.

in these and other things of a similar nature, we cannot forbear lifting up our hands in admiration of the 'wisdom of our ancestors.'

Some strange scenes appear now and then to have occurred in the Commons, and worthy rather of an Arkansas House of Assembly than of a British Parliament; of which the following is an example. As usual in such squabbles, the 'Pickwickian construction' of all offensive words seems to have prevailed at last. 'One day, upon a dispute of telling right upon division, both parties grew so hot that all order was lost; men came running up confusedly to the table, grievously affronted one by another; every man's hand on his hilt, quieted though at last by the prudence of the Speaker; every man in his place being obliged to stand up and engage his honour, not to resent any thing of that day's proceeding.'*

The disputes with the House of Lords were frequent, and difficult of adjustment. The following is a droll complication of their relations, and almost as hopeless as the celebrated 'dead-lock' in the 'Critic:' —'I have no more time than to tell you, that the Lords having judged and fined the East India Company, as we think *illegally*, upon the petition of one Skyner, a merchant, and they petitioning us for redress, we have imprisoned him that petitioned *them*, and they have imprisoned several of those that petitioned *us*. . . . It is a business of very high and dangerous consequence.'†

In a letter to William Ramsden, Esq., occurs another specimen of the awkward relations between the two Houses: —'I think I have not told you that, on our bill of subsidy, the Lord Lucas made a fervent bold speech against our prodigality in giving, and the weak looseness of the Government, the King being present; and the Lord Clare another, to persuade the King that he ought not to be present. But all this

* Marvell's Letters, p. 426. † Ibid. p. 106.

had little encouragement, not being seconded. Copies going about everywhere, one of them was brought into the Lords' house, and Lord Lucas was asked whether it was his. He said, part was and part was not. Thereupon they took advantage, and said it was a libel even against Lucas himself. On this they voted it a libel, and to be burned by the hangman, which was done; but the sport was, the hangman burned the Lords' order with it. I take the last quarrel betwixt us and the Lords to be as the ashes of that speech.' *

One or two other brief extracts from these letters seem not unworthy of insertion. The following is a curious example of the odd accidents on which important events often depend. Sir G. Carteret had been charged with embezzlement of public money. 'The House dividing upon the question, the ayes went out, and wondered why they were kept out so extraordinary a time; the ayes proved 138, and the noes 129; and the reason of the long stay then appeared:—The tellers for the ayes chanced to be very ill reckoners, so that they were forced to tell several times over in the House; and when at last the tellers for the ayes would have agreed the noes to be 142, the noes would needs say that they were 143; whereupon those for the ayes would tell once more, and then found the noes to be indeed but 129, and the ayes then coming in proved to be 138, whereas if the noes had been content with the first error of the tellers, Sir George had been quit upon that observation.' †

The following sounds odd:—'Yesterday, upon complaint of some violent arrests made in several churches, even during sermon time, nay, of one taken out betwixt the bread and the cup in receiving the sacrament, the House ordered that a bill be brought in for *better* observing the Lord's Day.' ‡

* Marvell's Letters, p. 416. † Ibid p. 125, 126.
‡ Ibid. p. 189.

Not seldom, to the very moderate 'wages' of a legislator, was added some homely expression of goodwill on the part of the constituents. That of the Hull people generally appeared in the shape of a stout cask of ale, for which Marvell repeatedly returns thanks. In one letter he says — 'We must first give you thanks for the kind present you have pleased to send us, which will give occasion to us to remember you often: but the quantity is so great that it might make sober men forgetful.' *

Marvell's correspondence extends through nearly twenty years. From June 1661, there is, however, a considerable break, owing to his absence for an unknown period — probably about two years — in Holland. He showed little disposition to return till Lord Bellasis, then High Steward of Hull, proposed to that worthy corporation to choose a substitute for their absent member. They replied that he was not far off, and would be ready at their summons. He was then at Frankfort, and at the solicitation of his constituents immediately returned, April, 1663.

But he had not been more than three months at home, when he intimated to his correspondents his intention to accept an invitation to accompany Lord Carlisle, who had been appointed ambassador-extraordinary to Russia, Sweden, and Denmark. He formally solicits the assent of his constituents to this step, urges the precedents for it, and assures them that, during his watchful colleague's attendance, his own services may be dispensed with. His constituents consented. He sailed in July, and appears to have been absent rather more than a year. We find him in his place in the Parliament that assembled at Oxford, 1665.

In 1671, for some unknown reason, there is another *hiatus* in his correspondence. It extends over three years. From 1674, the letters are regularly con-

* Marvell's Letters, p. 14, 15.

tinued till his death. There is no proof that he ever spoke in Parliament; but it appears that he took copious notes of all the debates.

The decisive tone which Marvell ever assumed in politics, — the severe, satirical things which he had said and written from time to time — and the conviction of his enemies, that it was impossible to silence him by the usual methods of a place or a brbie, must have rendered a wary and circumspect conduct peculiarly necessary; and, in fact, we are told that on more than one occasion he was menaced with assassination. But, though hated by the Court-party generally, he was as generally feared, and in some few instances respected. Prince Rupert continued to honour him with his friendship long after the rest of the Court-party had honoured him with their hatred, and occasionally visited the patriot at his lodgings. When he voted on the side of Marvell, which was not infrequently the case, it used to be said that 'he had been with his tutor.'

Inaccessible as Marvell was to flattery and offers of preferment, it certainly was not for want of temptations. The account of his memorable interview with the Lord Treasurer Danby has been often repeated, and yet it would be unpardonable to omit it here. Marvell, it appears, once spent an evening at Court, and charmed the merry monarch by his accomplishments and wit. At this we need not wonder: Charles loved wit above all things — except vice; and to his admiration of it he was continually sacrificing his royal dignity. On the morning after the above-mentioned interview, he sent Lord Danby to wait on the patriot with a special message of regard. His lordship had some difficulty in ferreting out Marvell's residence; but at last found him on a second floor, in a dark court leading out of the Strand. It is said that, groping up the narrow staircase, he stumbled against the door of Marvell's humble apartment, which, flying open, discovered him writing. Not a

little surprised, he asked his lordship, with a smile, if he had not mistaken his way. The latter replied, in courtly phrase, 'No; since I have found Mr. Marvell.' He proceeded to inform him that he came with a message from the King, who was impressed with a deep sense of his merits, and was anxious to serve him. Marvell replied, with somewhat of the spirit of the founder of the Cynics, but no doubt in a very different manner, 'that his Majesty had it not in his power to serve him.'* Becoming more serious, however, he told his lordship that he well knew that he who accepted Court favour was expected to vote in its interest. On his lordship's saying, 'that his Majesty only desired to know whether there was any place at Court he would accept,' the patriot replied, 'that he could accept nothing with honour; for either he must treat the King with ingratitude, by refusing compliance with Court measures, or be a traitor to his country by yielding to them.' The only favour, therefore, he begged of his Majesty was, to esteem him as a loyal subject, and truer to his interests in *refusing* his offers than he could be by *accepting* them. His lordship having exhausted this species of logic, tried the *argumentum ad crumenam*, and told him that his Majesty requested his acceptance of 1000*l*. But this, too, was rejected with firmness; 'though,' says his biographer, 'soon after the departure of his

* Another and less authentic version of this anecdote has been long current, much more circumstantial, indeed, but on that very account more apocryphal. If the too dramatic additions to the story, however, be fictions, they are amongst those fictions which have gained extensive circulation only because they are felt to be not intrinsically improbable. Some pains have been taken to investigate the origin of this version; but we can trace it no further than to a pamphlet printed in Ireland about the middle of the last century. Of this we have not been so fortunate as to get a sight. Suffice it to say, that the narrative it contains of the above interview, and which has been extensively circulated, is not borne out by the early biographies; for example, that of Cooke, 1726.

lordship, Marvell was compelled to borrow a guinea from a friend.'

In 1672 commenced Marvell's memorable controversy with Samuel Parker, afterwards Bishop of Oxford, of which we shall give a somewhat copious account. To this it is entitled, from the important influence which it had on Marvell's reputation and fortunes; and as having led to the composition of that work on which his literary fame, so far as he has any, principally depends — the 'Rehearsal Transprosed.'

Parker was one of the worst specimens of the highest of the high churchmen of the reign of Charles II. It is difficult, in such times as these, to conceive of such a character as, by universal testimony, Parker is proved to have been. Even Addison's Tory fox-hunter — who thought there had been 'no good weather since the Revolution,' and who proceeded to descant on the 'fine days they used to have in King Charles II.'s reign;' whose dog was chiefly endeared to him because he had once 'like to have worried a dissenting teacher;' and who 'had no other notion of religion but that it consisted in hating Presbyterians' — does not adequately represent him. Such men could not well flourish in any other age than that of Charles II.; happily the race, even then not numerous, could not propagate itself. Only in such a period of unblushing profligacy — of public corruption unexampled in the history of England — could we expect to find a Bishop Parker, and his patron and parallel, Archbishop Sheldon. Such men managed to combine the most hideous bigotry with an absence of all religious earnestness — a zeal worthy of a 'Pharisee' with a character which would have disgraced a 'publican.' Apparently as much attached to the veriest minutiæ of high church orthodoxy as the sincerest disciples of the present Oxford school, they yet gave reason to their very friends to doubt whether they did not secretly despise even the car-

dinal doctrines of Christianity.* Equivocal Christians in creed, and absolute infidels in practice, they yet insisted on the most scrupulous compliance with the most trivial points of ceremonial; and persisted in persecuting thousands of devout and honest men because they hesitated to obey. Things which they admitted to be indifferent, and which, without violation of conscience, they might have forborne to enforce, they remorselessly urged on those who solemnly declared that without such a violation they could not comply. More tolerant of acknowledged vice than of supposed error, they deemed drunkenness and debauchery venial, compared with doubts about the propriety of making the sign of the cross in baptism, or using the ring in marriage; it would have been better for a man to break half the commands in the decalogue, than admit a doubt of the most frivolous of their cherished rites. Equally truculent and servile, they displayed to all above them a meanness proportioned to the insolence they evinced to all below them. While preferring, on behalf of the church, the most extravagant pretensions, they were far from participating in any jealousy of the state, which they were ready to arm with the most despotic authority. They formally invested the monarch with absolute power over the consciences of his subjects; and, with a practice in harmony with their principles, were ready at any moment to surrender their own,—if they had

* Of Sheldon, Bishop Burnet says, that 'he seems not to have had any clear sense of religion, if any at all.' Of Parker, he speaks yet more strongly. But, perhaps, the most striking testimony is that of the Jesuit father, Edward Petre, cited by Mr. Dove. He says, 'the Bishop of Oxford has not yet declared himself openly: the great obstacle is his *wife*, whom he cannot rid himself of: though I do not see how he can be further useful to us in the religion he is in, because he is suspected, and of no esteem among the heretics of the English Church. . . . If he had believed my counsel, which was to *temporise* for some *longer time*, he would have done better.' Surely this Jesuit and his pupil were well matched for honesty.

had any. As far as appears, they would have been willing to embrace the faith of Mahometans or Hindoos at the bidding of his Majesty; and to believe and disbelieve as he commanded them. Extravagant as all this may seem, we shall shortly see it gravely propounded by Parker himself. It was fit that those who were willing to offer such vile adulation should be suffered to present it to such an object as Charles II. —that so grotesque an idolatry should have as grotesque an idol. The god was, indeed, every way worthy of the worshippers. In a word, these men seemed to reconcile the most opposite vices and the widest contrarieties: bigotry and laxity, — pride and meanness, — religious scrupulosity and mocking scepticism, — a persecuting zeal against conscience and an indulgent latitudinarianism towards vice, — the truculence of tyrants, and the sycophancy of parasites.

Happily the state of things which generated such men has long since passed away. But examples of this sort of high churchmanship were not infrequent in the age of Charles II.; and perhaps Bishop Parker may be considered the most perfect specimen of them. His father was one of Oliver Cromwell's most obsequious committee-men; the son, who was born in 1640, was brought up in the principles of the Puritans, and was sent to Oxford in 1659. He was just twenty at the Restoration, and immediately commenced and soon completed his transformation into one of the most arrogant and time-serving of high churchmen.

Some few propositions, for which he came earnestly to contend as 'for the faith once delivered to the saints,' may give an idea of the principles and the temper of this singular successor of the Apostles. He affirms, 'That unless princes have power to bind their subjects to that religion they apprehend most advantageous to public peace and tranquillity, and restrain those religious mistakes that tend to its subversion, they are no better than statues and images of authority: — That in cases and disputes of public concern-

ment, private men are not properly *sui juris;* they have no power over their own actions; they are not to be directed by their own judgments, or determined by their own wills, but by the commands and the determinations of the public conscience; and that if there be any sin in the command, he that imposed it shall answer for it, and not I, whose whole duty it is to obey. The commands of authority will warrant my obedience; my obedience will hallow, or at least excuse my action, and so secure me from sin, if not from error; and in all doubtful and disputable cases 'tis better to err with authority, than to be in the right against it:—That it is absolutely necessary to the peace and happiness of kingdoms, that there be set up a more severe government over men's consciences and religious persuasions than over their vices and immoralities; and that princes may with less hazard give liberty to men's vices and debaucheries than their consciences.'*

He must have a very narrow mind or uncharitable heart, who cannot give infirm human nature credit for the sincere adoption of the most opposite opinions. Still there are limits to this exercise of charity; there may be such a concurrence of suspicious symptoms, that our charity can be exercised only at the expense of our common sense. We can easily conceive, under ordinary circumstances, of Dissenters becoming Churchmen, and Churchmen becoming Dissenters; Tories and Whigs changing sides; Protestants and Romanists, like those two brothers mentioned in Locke's second 'Letter on Toleration,'† so expert in logic as to convert one another, and then, unhappily, not expert enough to convert one another back again —and all without any suspicion of insincerity. But when great revolutions of opinion are also very sudden, and exquisitely well-timed in relation to private

* The Rehearsal Transprosed, vol. i. pp. 97, 98, 99, 100, 101.
† Locke's Works, vol. v. p. 79.

interest;—when these changes, let them be what they may, are always, like those of the heliotrope, towards the sun;—when a man is utterly uncharitable even to his own previous errors, and foully maligns and abuses all who still retain them, it is impossible to doubt the motives which have animated him. On this subject Marvell himself well observes—'Though a man be obliged to change a hundred times backward and forward, if his judgment be so weak and variable, yet there are some drudgeries that no man of honour would put himself upon, and but few submit to if they were imposed; as, suppose one had thought fit to pass over from one persuasion of the Christian religion into another, he would not choose to spit thrice at every article that he relinquished, to curse solemnly his father and mother for having educated him in those opinions, to animate his new acquaintances to the massacring of his former comrades. These are businesses that can only be expected from a renegade of Algiers and Tunis;—to overdo in expiation, and gain better credence of being a sincere Mussulman.'*

Marvell gives an amusing account of the progress of Parker's conversion—of the transformation by which the maggot became a carrion-fly. In the second part of the 'Rehearsal,' after a humorous description of his parentage and youth, we are told that at the Restoration 'he came to London, where he spent a considerable time in creeping into all corners and companies, horoscoping up and down' ('astrologising' as he elsewhere expresses it) 'concerning the duration of the government;—not considering anything as *best*, but as *most lasting*, and *most profitable:* and after having many times cast a figure, he at last satisfied himself that the Episcopal government would endure as long as this King lived, and from thenceforward cast about how to be admitted into the Church of

* Rehearsal Transprosed, vol. i. pp. 91, 92.

England, and find the highway to her preferments. In order to this, he daily enlarged not only his conversation but his conscience, and was made free of some of the town vices; imagining, like Muleasses, King of Tunis, (for I take witness that on all occasions I treat him rather above his quality than otherwise,) that, by hiding himself among the onions, he should escape being traced by his perfumes.'* Marvell sketches the early history and character of Parker in both parts of the 'Rehearsal'—though, as might be expected, with greater severity in the second than in the first. A few sentences may not displease the reader. He says:—

'This gentleman, as I have heard, after he had read Don Quixote and the Bible, besides such school-books as were necessary for his age, was sent early to the university; and there studied hard, and in a short time became a competent rhetorician, and no ill disputant. He had learned how to erect a *thesis*, and to defend it *pro* and *con* with a serviceable distinction. . . . . And so, thinking himself now ripe and qualified for the greatest undertakings and highest fortune, he therefore exchanged the narrowness of the university for the town; but coming out of the confinement of the square cap and the quadrangle into the open air, the world began to turn round with him, which he imagined, though it were his own giddiness, to be nothing less than the quadrature of the circle. This accident concurring so happily to increase the good opinion which he naturally had of himself, he thenceforward applied to gain a like reputation with others. He followed the town life, haunted the best companies; and, to polish himself from any pedantic roughness, he read and saw the plays with much care, and more proficiency than most of the auditory. But all this while he forgot not the main chance; but hearing of a vacancy with a nobleman, he clapped in, and easily obtained to be his chaplain: from that day you may take the date of his preferments and his ruin; for having soon wrought himself dexterously into his patron's favour, by short graces and sermons, and a mimical way of drolling upon the Puritans, which he knew would take both at chapel and at table, he gained a great authority likewise among all the domestics. They all listened to him as an oracle; and they allowed him, by common consent, to have not only all

* Rehearsal Transprosed, vol. ii. pp. 77, 78.

the divinity, but more wit, too, than all the rest of the family put together. . . . . Nothing now must serve him, but he must be a madman in print, and write a book of Ecclesiastical Polity. There he distributes all the territories of conscience into the prince's province, and makes the hierarchy to be but bishops of the air; and talks at such an extravagant rate in things of higher concernment, that the reader will avow that in the whole discourse he had not one lucid interval.' *

The work here mentioned, the 'Ecclesiastical Polity,' was published in the year 1670. But the book which called forth Marvell, was a Preface to a posthumous work of Archbishop Bramhall's, which appeared in 1672. In this piece, Parker had displayed his usual zeal against the nonconformists, with more than usual acrimony, and pushed to the uttermost extravagance his favourite maxims of ecclesiastical tyranny. Like his previous works on similar matters, it was anonymous, though the author was pretty well known. Marvell dubs him 'Mr. Bayes,' under which name the Duke of Buckingham had ridiculed Dryden in the well-known play of the 'Rehearsal;' from the title of which Marvell designated his book, 'The Rehearsal Transprosed.' The latter word was suggested by the scene in which Mr. Bayes gives an account of the manner in which he manufactured his plays: *Bayes*—'Why, sir, my first rule is the rule of transversion, or *regula duplex*,—changing verse into prose, or prose into verse, *alternativè*, as you please.' *Smith*—'Well, but how is this done by rule, sir?' *Bayes*—'Why thus, sir; nothing so easy when understood. I take a book in my hand, either at home or elsewhere, for that's all one: if there be any wit in't, as there is no book but has some, I *transverse* it; that is, if it be prose put it into verse, (but that takes up some time,) and if it be verse put it into prose.' *Johnson*—'Methinks, Mr. Bayes, that putting verse into prose should be called *transprosing*.' *Bayes*—'By my troth, sir, 'tis a very good notion, and hereafter it shall be so.'

* Rehearsal Transprosed, vol. i. pp. 62—69.

The success of the 'Rehearsal' was instant and signal. 'After Parker had for some years entertained the nation with several virulent books,' says Burnet, 'he was attacked by the liveliest droll of the age, who wrote in a burlesque strain, but with so peculiar and entertaining a conduct, that, from the King down to the tradesman, his books were read with great pleasure: that not only humbled Parker but the whole party; for the author of the 'Rehearsal Transprosed' had all the men of wit, (or, as the French phrase it, all the *laughers*,) on his side.'

In fact, Marvell exhibited his adversary in so ridiculous a light, that even his own party could not keep their countenances. The unhappy churchman resembled Gulliver at the court of Brobdignag, when the mischievous page stuck him into the marrow-bone. He cut such a ridiculous figure, that, says the author just cited, even the King and his courtiers could not help laughing at him.

The first part of the 'Rehearsal' elicited several answers. They were written for the most part in very unsuccessful imitation of Marvell's style of banter, and are now wholly forgotten. Marvell gives an amusing account of the efforts which were made to obtain effective replies, and of the hopes of preferment which may be supposed to have inspired their authors. Parker himself for some time declined any reply. At last came out his 'Reproof to the Rehearsal Transprosed,' in which he urged the Government 'to *crush the pestilent wit*, the servant of Cromwell, and the friend of Milton.' To this work, Marvell replied in the second part of the 'Rehearsal.' He was further spirited to it by an anonymous letter, pleasant and laconic enough, left for him at a friend's house, signed 'T. G.,' and concluding with the words—'If thou darest to print any lie or libel against Dr. Parker, by the eternal God, I will cut thy throat!' He who wrote it, whoever he was, was ignorant of Marvell's nature,

if he thought thereby to intimidate him into silence. His intrepid spirit was simply provoked by this insolent threat, which he took care to publish in the title-page of his Reply. To this publication Parker attempted no rejoinder. Anthony Wood himself tells us, that Parker 'judged it more prudent to lay down the cudgels, than to enter the lists again with an untowardly combatant, so hugely well-versed and experienced in the then but newly refined art, though much in mode and fashion ever since, of sporting and jeering buffoonery. It was generally thought, however, by many of those who were otherwise favourers of Parker's cause, that the victory lay on Marvell's side, and it wrought this good effect on Parker, that for ever after it took down his great spirit:' and Burnet tells us, that he 'withdrew from the town, and ceased writing for some years.'

Of this, the principal work of Marvell's singular genius, it is difficult, even were there space for it, to present the reader with any considerable extracts. The allusions are often so obscure—the wit of one page is so dependent on that of another—the humour and pleasantry are so continuous—and the character of the work, from its very nature, is so excursive, that its merits can be appreciated only on a regular perusal. There are other reasons, too, which render lengthened citations scarcely practicable. The composition has faults which would inevitably disgust the generality of modern readers, or rather deter them altogether from giving any long extracts a continuous perusal. The work is also characterised by not a little of the coarseness which was so prevalent in that age, and from which Marvell was by no means free; though, as we shall endeavour hereafter to show, his spirit was far from partaking of the malevolence of ordinary satirists. Some few instances of felicitous repartee or ludicrous imagery, which we have noted in a reperusal of the work, will be found further on.

Yet the reader must not infer that the sole, or even

the chief, merit of the 'Rehearsal Transprosed' consists in wit and banter. Not only is there, amidst all its ludicrous levities, 'a vehemence of solemn reproof, and an eloquence of invective, that awes one with the spirit of the modern Junius;'* but there are many passages of very powerful reasoning, in advocacy of truths which were then but ill understood, and of rights which had been shamefully violated.

Perhaps the most interesting passages of the work are those in which Marvell refers to his great friend, John Milton. Parker, with his customary malignity, had insinuated that the poet, who was then living in cautious retirement, might have been the author of the 'Rehearsal'— apparently with the view of turning the indignation of Government upon the illustrious recluse. Marvell had always entertained towards Milton a feeling of reverence akin to idolatry, and this stroke of deliberate malice was more than he could bear. He generously hastened to throw his shield over his exposed and prostrate patron.

About three years after the publication of the second part of the 'Rehearsal,' Marvell's chivalrous love of justice impelled him again to draw the sword. In 1675, Dr. Croft, Bishop of Hereford, had published a work entitled, 'The Naked Truth, or the True State of the Primitive Church, by a Humble Moderator.' This work deserved the character of that sermon which Corporal Trim shook out of the volume of Stevinus. 'If you have no objections,' said Mr. Shandy to Dr. Slop, 'Trim shall read it.' 'Not in the least,' replied Dr. Slop, 'for it does not appear on which side of the question it is wrote; it may be a composition of a divine of *our* church, as well as of *yours*, so that we run equal risks.' ''Tis wrote upon *neither* side,' quoth Trim, 'for it is *only* upon conscience, an' please your honours.' Even so was it with the good bishop's little piece. It was written on neither side. It en-

* D'Israeli.

joined on all religious parties the unwelcome duties of forbearance and charity; but as it especially exposed the danger and folly of enforcing a minute uniformity, it could not be suffered to pass unchallenged in that age of high church intolerance. It was petulantly attacked by Dr. Francis Turner, Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, in a pamphlet entitled, 'Animadversions on the Naked Truth.' This provoked our satirist, who replied in a pamphlet entitled, 'Mr. Smirke, or the Divine in Mode.' He here fits his antagonist with a character out of Etherege's 'Man of Mode'—as he had before fitted Parker with one from Buckingham's 'Rehearsal.' The merits and defects of this pamphlet are of much the same order as those of his former work—it is perhaps less disfigured by coarseness and vehemence. Of Dr. Croft's pamphlet, he beautifully expresses a feeling, of which we imagine few can have been unconscious when perusing any work which strongly appeals to our reason and conscience, and in which, as we proceed, we seem to recognise what we have often thought, but never uttered. 'It is a book of that kind, that no Christian can peruse it without wishing himself to have been the author, and almost imagining that he is so: the conceptions therein being of so eternal an idea, that every man finds it to be but a copy of the original in his own mind.'

To this *brochure* was attached, 'A Short Historical Essay concerning General Councils, Creeds, and Impositions in Matters of Religion.' It is characterised by the same strong sense and untiring vivacity as his other writings, and evinces a creditable acquaintance with ecclesiastical history; but it is neither copious nor profound enough for the subject.

In 1677, Marvell published his last controversial piece, elicited like the rest by his disinterested love of fair play. It was a defence of the celebrated divine, John Howe, whose conciliatory tract on the 'Divine Prescience' had been rudely assailed by three several

antagonists. This little volume, which is throughout in Marvell's vein, is now extremely scarce. It is not included in any edition of his works, and appears to have been unknown to all his biographers.

His last work of any extent was entitled, 'An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England.' It first appeared in 1678. It is written with much vigour — boldly vindicates the great principles of the constitution — and discusses the limits of the royal prerogative. The gloomy anticipations expressed by the author were but too well justified by the public events which transpired subsequently to his death. But the worst consequences of the principles and policy he denounced, were happily averted by the Revolution of 1688.

A reward was offered by the Government for the discovery of the author of this 'libel,' as it was pleasantly designated. Marvell seems to have taken the matter very coolly, and thus humorously alludes to the subject in a private letter to Mr. Ramsden, dated June 10. 1678—'There came out about Christmas last, here, a large book concerning the growth of popery and arbitrary government. There have been great rewards offered in private, and considerable in the Gazette, to any one who could inform of the author or printer, but not yet discovered. Three or four printed books since have described, as near as it was proper to go (the man being a member of Parliament), Mr. Marvell to have been the author; but, if he had, surely he should not have escaped being questioned in Parliament, or some other place.'

Marvell published, during the latter years of his life, several other political pamphlets, which, though now forgotten, were doubtless not without their influence in unmasking corruption, and rousing the nation to a consciousness of its political degradation. One *jeu d'esprit* — a parody on the speeches of Charles II. — in which the flippancy and easy impudence of those singular specimens of royal eloquence are happily mi-

micked and scarcely caricatured, is very characteristic of his caustic humour. A few sentences may not displease the reader.

'I told you at our last meeting, the winter was the fittest time for business, and truly I thought so, till my lord-treasurer assured me the spring was the best season for salads and subsidies. . . . Some of you, perhaps, will think it dangerous to make me too rich; but I do not fear it, for I promise you faithfully, whatever you give me, I will always want; and, although in other things my word may be thought a slender authority, yet in that, you may rely on me, I will never break it. . . . . I can bear my straits with patience; but my lord-treasurer does protest to me, that the revenue, as it now stands, will not serve him and me too. One of us must pinch for it, if you do not help me. . . . What shall we do for ships then? I hint this only to you, it being your business, not mine. I know by experience I can live without ships. I lived ten years abroad without, and never had my health better in my life; but how *you* will be without, I will leave to yourselves to judge, and therefore hint this only by-the-bye. I don't insist upon it. There is another thing I must press more earnestly, and that is this: it seems a good part of my revenue will expire in two or three years, except you will be pleased to continue it. I have to say for it—pray, why did you give me so much as you have done, unless you resolve to give on as fast as I call for it? The nation hates you already for giving so much, and I will hate you too if you do not give me more. So that, if you do not stick to me you will not have a friend in England. . . . . Therefore look to it, and take notice, that if you do not make me rich enough to undo you, it shall lie at your door. For my part I wash my hands on it. . . . I have converted my natural sons from popery. . . . 'Twould do one's heart good to hear how prettily George can read already in the psalter. They are all fine children, God bless 'em, and so like me in their understandings! But, as I was saying, I have, to please you, given a pension to your favourite, my Lord Lauderdale, not so much that I thought he wanted it, as that you would take it kindly. . . . I know not, for my part, what factious men would have; but this I am sure of, my predecessors never did anything like this, to gain the good-will of their subjects. So much for your religion, and now for your property. . . . I must now acquaint you, that, by my lord-treasurer's advice, I have made a considerable retrenchment upon my expenses in candles and charcoal, and do not intend to stop; but will, with your help, look into the late embezzlements of my dripping-pans and

kitchen-stuff, of which by the way, upon my conscience, neither my lord-treasurer nor my Lord Lauderdale are guilty.'*

Marvell's intrepid patriotism and bold writings had now made him so odious to the corrupt Court, and especially to the bigoted James, that he was compelled frequently to conceal himself for fear of assassination. He makes an affecting allusion to this in one of his private letters: —'*Magis occidere*,' says he, '*metuo quam occidi; non quod vitam tanti æstimem, sed ne imparatus moriar.*'†

He died August 16. 1678, the year that his obnoxious work on the growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government appeared; and, as he was in vigorous health just before, suspicions were entertained that he had been poisoned.

In person, according to the description of Aubrey, who knew him well, Marvell 'was of a middling stature, pretty strong set, roundish-faced, cherry-cheeked, hazel-eyed, brown-haired. In his conversation he was modest, and of very few words. He was wont to say, he would not drink high or freely with any one with whom he could not trust his life.' Captain Thompson gives a somewhat different account of his complexion and the colour of his eyes; but, as is often the case in more important points, he does not mention his authority. It seems probable that he has been giving us a description from the impression conveyed by the portraits (of which there are two), without allowing for the effects of time; so that we have but the picture of a picture.

Of the editions of Marvell's collected works, that of 1726, in two volumes duodecimo, contains only his poems and some of his private letters. That of Captain Thompson, in three volumes quarto, was published in 1776. Yet even this, as already said, omits one treatise. The captain's diligence is indeed worthy

* Marvell's Works, vol. i. pp. 428, 429.

† Cooke's Life of Marvell, prefixed to his Poems, p. 14.

of commendation, and his enthusiasm may be pardoned. But he was far from being a correct or judicious editor, and is often betrayed by his indiscriminate admiration into excessive and preposterous eulogy. The only separate biography is, we believe, the little volume mentioned at the head of this article.

The characteristic attribute of Marvell's genius was unquestionably wit, in all the varieties of which —brief sententious sarcasm, fierce invective, light raillery, grave irony, and broad laughing humour — he seems to have been by nature almost equally fitted to excel. To say that he *has* equally excelled in all would be untrue, though striking examples of each might easily be selected from his writings. The activity with which his mind suggests ludicrous images and analogies is astonishing; he often positively startles us by the remoteness and oddity of the sources from which they are supplied, and by the unexpected ingenuity and felicity of his repartees.

His *forte*, however, appears to be a grave ironical banter, which he often pursues at such a length that there seems no limit to his fertility of invention. In his accumulation of ludicrous images and allusions,— the untiring exhaustive ridicule with which he will play upon the same topics,—he is unique; yet this peculiarity not seldom leads him to drain the generous wine even to the dregs; to spoil a series of felicitous railleries by some far-fetched conceit, or unpardonable extravagance.

But though Marvell was so great a master of wit, and especially of that caustic species which is appropriate to satirists, he seems to have been singularly free from many of the faults which distinguish that irritable brotherhood. Unsparing and merciless as his ridicule is, contemptuous and ludicrous as are the lights in which he exhibits his opponent; nay, further, though his invectives are not only often terribly severe, but (in compliance with the spirit of the age)

often grossly coarse and personal, it is still impossible to detect a single particle of malignity. His general tone is either that of broad mirthful banter, or of the most cutting invective; but he appears equally devoid of malevolence in both. In the one, he seems amusing himself with opponents, for whom he has too much contempt to feel anger; in the other, to act with the stern imperturbable gravity of one who is performing the unpleasant but necessary functions of a public executioner. This freedom from the usual faults of satirists may be traced to several causes; partly to the *bonhommie* which, with all his talents for satire, was a peculiar characteristic of the man, and which rendered him as little disposed to take offence, and as placable when it was offered, as any man of his time; partly to the integrity of his nature, which, while it prompted him to champion any cause in which justice had been outraged or innocence wronged, effectually preserved him from the wanton exercise of his wit for the gratification of malevolence; partly, perhaps principally, to the fact, that both the above qualities restricted him to encounters in which he had personally no concern. If he carried a keen sword, it was a most peaceable and gentlemanly weapon; it never left the scabbard except on the highest provocation, and, even then, only on behalf of others. His magnanimity, self-control, and good-temper, restrained him from avenging any insult offered to himself;—his chivalrous love of justice instantly roused all the lion within him on behalf of the injured and oppressed. It is perhaps well for Marvell's fame that his quarrels were not personal: had they been so, it is hardly probable that such powers of sarcasm and irony should have been so little associated with bitterness of temper.

Nor let it be said, that this freedom from malignity in the exercise of his wit scarcely deserves much praise; for though it is true, that there is no necessary connexion between that quality of mind and the

malevolent passions (as numberless illustrious examples sufficiently prove), yet it offers great temptations to their indulgence, and is almost always combined with that constitutional irritability of genius which it so readily gratifies, and, by gratifying, transforms into something worse. Half the tendencies of our nature pass into habits only from the facilities which encourage their development. Quarrels were infinitely more frequent when all men were accustomed to wear arms; and, similarly, many a waspish temper has become so, principally from being in possession of the weapon of satire. Not seldom, too, it must be sorrowfully admitted, the most exquisite sense of the ridiculous has been strangely combined with a morbid saturnine temperament, which looks on all things with a jaundiced imagination, and surveys human infirmities and foibles with feelings not more remote from those of compassionate benevolence than of genuine mirth. Happy when, as in the case of Cowper, the influence of a benign heart and unfeigned humility, prevents this tendency from degenerating into universal malevolence! There are few things more shockingly incongruous than the ghastly union of wit and misanthropy. Wit should be ever of open brow, joyous, and frank-hearted. Even the severest satire may be delicious reading when penned with the *bonhommie* of Horace or of Addison, or the equanimity of Plato or of Pascal. Without pretending that Marvell had aught of the elegance or the delicacy of any of these immortal writers, we firmly believe he had as much kindly feeling as any of them. Unhappily the two by no means go together; there may be the utmost refinement without a particle of good-nature; and a great deal of good-nature without any refinement. It were easy to name writers, who, with the most exquisite grace of diction, can as little disguise the malice of their nature, as Marvell, with all his coarseness, can make us doubt his benevolence. Through the veil of their language (of beautiful tex-

ture, but too transparent) we see chagrin poorly simulating mirth; anger struggling to appear contempt, and failing; malevolence writhing itself into an aspect of ironical courtesy, but with grim distortion in the attempt; and sarcasms urged by the impulses which, under different circumstances, and in another country, would have prompted to the use of the stiletto.

It is impossible, indeed, not to regret the coarseness, often amounting to buffoonery, of Marvell's wit; though, from the consideration just urged, we regard it with some forbearance. Other palliations have been pleaded for him, derived from the character of his adversaries, the haste with which he wrote, and the spirit of the age. The last is the strongest. The tomahawk and the scalping-knife were not yet discreditable weapons, or thrown aside as fit only for savage warfare; and it is even probable, that many of the things which we should regard as gross insults then passed as pardonable jests. It is difficult for us, of course, to imagine that callousness which scarcely thinks any thing an insult but what is enforced by the *argumentum baculinum*. Between the feelings of our forefathers and our own, there seems to have been as great a difference as between those of the farmer and the clergyman, so ludicrously described by Cowper in his 'Yearly Distress:'—

> "O, why are farmers made so coarse,
> Or clergy made so fine?
> A kick that scarce would move a horse,
> May kill a sound divine."

The haste with which Marvell wrote must also be pleaded as an excuse for the inequalities of his works. It was not the age in which authors elaborated and polished with care, or submitted with a good grace to the *limæ labor;* and if it had been, Marvell allowed himself no leisure for the task. The second part of the 'Rehearsal,' for example, was published in the

same year in which Parker's 'Reproof' appeared. We must profess our belief, that no small portion of his writings stand in great need of the like apology. Exhibiting, as they do, amazing vigour and fertility, the wit is by no means always of the first order.

We must not quit the subject of his wit, without presenting the reader with some few of his pleasantries,—premising that they form but a very small part of those which we had marked in the perusal of his works; and that, whatever their merit, it were easy to find many others fully equal to them, if we could afford space for citation.

Ironically bewailing the calamitous effects of printing, our author exclaims—'O Printing! how hast thou disturbed the peace of mankind! Lead, when moulded into bullets, is not so mortal as when founded into letters. There was a mistake, sure, in the story of Cadmus; and the serpents' teeth which he sowed were nothing else but the letters which he invented.' Parker having declared, in relation to some object of his scurrility, that he had written, 'not to impair his esteem,' but 'to correct his scribbling humour;' Marvell says—'Our author is as courteous as lightning, and can melt the sword without ever hurting the scabbard.' After alleging that his opponent often has a byplay of malignity even when bestowing commendations, he remarks—'The author's end was only railing. He could never have induced himself to praise one man but in order to rail on another. He never oils his hone but that he may whet his razor, and that not to shave but to cut men's throats.' On Parker's absurd and bombastic exaggeration of the merits and achievements of Bishop Bramhall, Marvell wittily says—'Any worthy man may pass through the world unquestioned and safe, with a moderate recommendation; but when he is thus set off and bedaubed with rhetoric, and embroidered so thick that you cannot discern the ground, it awakens naturally (and not altogether unjustly) interest, curiosity, and

envy. For all men pretend a share in reputation, and love not to see it engrossed and monopolised; and are subject to inquire (as of great estates suddenly got) whether he came by all this honestly, or of what credit the person is that tells the story? And the same hath happened as to this bishop. . . . Men seeing him furbished up in so martial accoutrements, like another Odo, bishop of Baieux, and having never before heard of his prowess, begin to reflect what giants he defeated, and what damsels he rescued. . . After all our author's bombast, when we have searched all over, we find ourselves bilked in our expectation; and he hath created the bishop, like a St. Christopher in the popish churches, as big as ten porters, and yet only employed to sweat under the burden of an infant.' Of the paroxysms of rage with which Parker refers to one of his adversaries, whom he distinguishes by his initials, Marvell says — 'As oft as he does but name those two first letters, he is like the island of Fayal, on fire in threescore and ten places;' and affirms, 'that if he were of that fellow's diet here about town, that epicurises on burning coals, drinks healths in scalding brimstone, scranches the glasses for his dessert, and draws his breath through glowing tobacco-pipes, he could not show more flame than he always does upon that subject.' Parker, in a passage of unequalled absurdity, having represented Geneva as on the south side of the lake Leman, Marvell ingeniously represents the blunder as the subject of discussion in a private company, where various droll solutions are proposed, and where he, with exquisite irony, pretends to take Parker's part. 'I,' says Marvell, 'that was still on the doubtful and excusing part, said, that to give the right situation of a town, it was necessary first to know in what position the gentleman's head then was when he made his observation, and that might cause a great diversity — as much as this came to.' Having charged his adversary with needlessly obtruding upon the world some petty matters which

concerned only himself, from an exaggerated idea of his own importance, Marvell drolly says — 'When a man is once possessed with this fanatic kind of spirit, he imagines if a shoulder do but itch that the world has galled it with leaning on it so long, and therefore he wisely shrugs to remove the globe to the other. If he chance but to sneeze, he salutes himself, and courteously prays that the foundations of the earth be not shaken. And even so the author of the "Ecclesiastical Polity," ever since he crept up to be but the weathercock of a steeple, trembles and creaks at every puff of wind that blows him about, as if the Church of England were falling, and the state tottered.' After ludicrously describing the effect of the first part of the 'Rehearsal' in exacerbating all his opponent's evil passions, he remarks — 'He seems not so fit at present for the archdeacon's seat, as to take his place below in the church amongst the *energumeni*.' Parker had charged him with a sort of plagiarism for having quoted so many passages out of his book. On this Marvell observes — 'It has, I believe, indeed angered him, as it has been no small trouble to me; but how can I help it? I wish he would be pleased to teach me an art (for, if any man in the world, he hath it) to answer a book without turning over the leaves, or without citing passages. In the mean time, if to transcribe so much out of him must render a man, as he therefore styles me, a "scandalous plagiary," I must plead guilty; but by the same law, whoever shall either be witness or prosecutor in behalf of the King, for treasonable words, may be indicted for a highwayman.' Parker having viewed some extravaganza of Marvell's riotous wit as if worthy of serious comment, the latter says—'Whereas I only threw it out like an empty cask to amuse him, knowing that I had a whale to deal with, and lest he should overset me; he runs away with it as a very serious business, and so moyles himself with tumbling and tossing it, that he is in danger of melting his spermaceti. A cork, I see, will serve without a hook;

and, instead of a harping-iron, this grave and ponderous creature may, like eels, be taken and pulled up only with bobbing.' After exposing, in a strain of uncommon eloquence, the wickedness and folly of suspending the peace of the nation on so frivolous a matter as 'ceremonial,' he says — 'For a prince to adventure all upon such a cause, is like Duke Charles of Burgundy, who fought three battles for an imposition upon sheep-skins;' and 'for a clergyman to offer at persecution upon this ceremonial account, is (as is related of one of the popes) to justify his indignation for his peacock, by the example of God's anger for eating the forbidden fruit.' He justifies his severity towards Parker in a very ludicrous way: 'No man needs letters of marque against one that is an open pirate of other men's credit. I remember, within our own time, one Simons, who robbed always on the bricolle — that is to say, never interrupted the *passengers*, but still set upon the *thieves themselves*, after, like Sir John Falstaff, they were gorged with a booty; and by this way — so ingenious that it was scarce criminal — he lived secure and unmolested all his days, with the reputation of a judge rather than of a highwayman.' The sentences we have cited are taken from the 'Rehearsal.' We had marked many more from his 'Divine in Mode,' and other writings, but have no space for them.

But he who supposes Marvell to have been nothing but a wit, simply on account of the predominance of that quality, will do him injustice. It is the common lot of such men, in whom some one faculty is found on a great scale, to fail of part of the admiration due to other endowments, possessed in more moderate degree, indeed, but still in a degree far from ordinary. We are subject to the same illusion in gazing on mountain scenery. Fixing our eye on some solitary peak, which towers far above the rest, the groups of surrounding hills look positively diminutive, though they may, in fact, be all of great magnitude.

This illusion is further fostered by another circumstance in the case of great wits. As the object of wit is to amuse, the owl-like gravity of thousands of common readers is apt to decide that wit and wisdom must dwell apart, and that the humorous writer must necessarily be a trifling one. For similar reasons, they look with sage suspicion on every signal display, either of fancy or passion; think a splendid illustration nothing but the ambuscade of a fallacy, and strong emotion as tantamount to a confession of unsound judgment. As Archbishop Whately has well remarked, such men having been warned that 'ridicule is not the test of truth,' and that 'wisdom and wit are not the same thing, distrust every thing that can possibly be regarded as witty; not having judgment to perceive the combination, when it occurs, of wit and sound reasoning. The ivy wreath completely conceals from their view the point of the *thyrsus*.'

The fact is, that all Marvell's endowments were on a large scale, though his wit greatly predominated. His judgment was remarkably clear and sound, his logic by no means contemptible, his sagacity in practical matters great, his talents for business apparently of the first order, and his industry indefatigable. His imagination, though principally employed in ministering to his wit, would, if sufficiently cultivated, have made him a poet considerably above mediocrity: though chiefly alive to the ludicrous, he was by no means insensible to the beautiful. We cannot, indeed, bestow all the praise on his Poems which some of his critics have assigned them. They are very plentifully disfigured by the conceits and quaintnesses of the age, and as frequently want grace of expression and harmony of numbers. Of the compositions which Captain Thompson's indiscriminate admiration would fain have affiliated to his muse, the best are proved not to be his; and one is of doubtful origin. The hymn, beginning —

"When Israel, freed from Pharaoh's hand,"

is a well-known composition of Dr. Watts; while the ballad of 'William and Margaret' is of dubious authorship. Though probably of earlier date than the age of Mallet, its reputed author, the reasons which Captain Thompson gives for assigning it to Marvell are altogether unsatisfactory. Still, there are unquestionably many of his genuine poems which indicate a rich, though ill-cultivated fancy; and in some few stanzas there is no little grace of expression. The little piece on the Pilgrim Fathers, entitled the 'Emigrants,' the fanciful 'Dialogue between Body and Soul,' the 'Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure,' and the 'Coronet,' all contain lines of much elegance and sweetness. It is in his satirical poems, that, as might be expected from the character of his mind, his fancy appears most vigorous; though these too are largely disfigured by the characteristic defects of the age, and many, it must be confessed, are entirely without merit. With two or three lines from his ludicrous satire on Holland, we cannot refrain from amusing the reader. Some of the strokes of humour are certainly happy:—

'Holland, that scarce deserves the name of land,
As but the off-scouring of the British sand;
And so much earth as was contributed
By English pilots when they heav'd the lead;
Or what by th' ocean's slow alluvion fell,
Of shipwreck'd cockle and the muscle-shell;
This indigested vomit of the sea
Fell to the Dutch by just propriety.
Glad then, as miners who have found the ore,
They, with mad labour, fish'd the land to shore;
And dived as desperately for each piece
Of earth, as if it had been of ambergris;
Collecting anxiously small loads of clay,
Less than what building swallows bear away;
For as with pigmies, who best kills the crane,
Among the hungry he that treasures grain,
Among the blind the one-eyed blinkard reigns,
So rules among the drowned he that drains.

Not who first sees the rising sun commands;
But who could first discern the rising lands.
Who best could know to pump an earth so leak,
Him they their lord, and country's father, speak.'

His Latin poems are amongst his best. The composition often shows no contemptible skill in that language; and here and there the diction and versification are such as would not have absolutely disgraced his great coadjutor, Milton. In all the higher poetic qualities there can, of course, be no comparison between them.

With such a mind as we have ascribed to him — and we think his works fully justify what has been said — with such aptitudes for business, soundness of judgment, powers of reasoning, and readiness of sarcasm, one might have anticipated that he would have taken some rank as an orator. Nature, it is certain, had bestowed upon him some of the most important intellectual endowments of one. It is true, indeed, that with his principles and opinions he would have found himself strangely embarrassed in addressing any Parliament in the days of Charles II., and stood but a moderate chance of obtaining a candid hearing. But we have no proof that he ever made the trial. His parliamentary career in this respect resembled that of a much greater man — Addison, who, with wit even superior to his own, and with much more elegance, if not more strength of mind, failed signally as a speaker.

Marvell's learning must have been very extensive. His education was superior; and, as we have seen from the testimony of Milton, his industry had made him master, during his long sojourn on the Continent, of several continental languages. It is certain, also, that he continued to be a student all his days: his works bear ample evidence of his wide and miscellaneous reading. He appears to have been well versed in most branches of literature, though he makes no pedantic display of erudition, and in this

respect is favourably distinguished from many of his contemporaries; yet he cites his authors with the familiarity of a thorough scholar. In the department of history he appears to have been particularly well read; and derives his witty illustrations from such remote and obscure sources, that Parker did not hesitate to avow his belief that he had sometimes drawn on his invention for them. In his reply, Marvell justifies himself in all the alleged instances, and takes occasion to show that his opponent's learning is as hollow as all his other pretensions.

The style of Marvell is very unequal. Though often rude and unpolished, it abounds in negligent felicities, presents us with frequent specimens of vigorous idiomatic English, and now and then attains no mean degree of elegance. It bears the stamp of the revolution which was then passing on the language,—being a medium between the involved and periodic structure, so common during the former half of the century, (though ill adapted to a language possessing so few inflections as ours,) and that simplicity and harmony which were not fully attained till the age of Addison. There is a very large infusion of short sentences, and the structure in general is as unlike that of his great colleague's prose as can be imagined. Many of Marvell's pages flow with so much ease and grace, as to be not unworthy of a later period. To that revolution in style to which we have just alluded, he must, in no slight degree, have contributed; for, little as his works are known or read now, the most noted of them were once universally popular, and perused with pleasure, as Burnet testifies, by everybody, 'from the king to the tradesman.'

Numerous examples show, that it is almost impossible for even the rarest talents to confer permanent popularity on books which turn on topics of temporary interest, however absorbing at the time. If

Pascal's transcendent genius has been unable to rescue even the 'Lettres Provinciales' from partial oblivion, it is not to be expected that Marvell should have done more for the 'Rehearsal Transprosed.' Swift, it is true, about half a century later, was pleased, while expressing a similar opinion, to make an exception in favour of Marvell. 'There is, indeed,' says he, 'an exception when any great genius thinks it worth his while to expose a foolish piece; so we still read Marvell's answer to Parker with pleasure, though the book it answers be sunk long ago.' But this statement is scarcely applicable now. It is true that the 'Rehearsal' is occasionally read by the curious; but it is by the resolutely curious alone.

Yet assuredly he has not lived in vain who has successfully endeavoured to abate the nuisances of his own time, or to put down some insolent abettor of vice and corruption. Nor is it possible in a world like this, in which there is such continuity of causes and effects—where one generation transmits its good and its evil to the next, and the consequences of each revolution in principles, opinions, or tastes, are propagated along the whole line of humanity—to estimate either the degree or perpetuity of the benefits conferred by the complete success of works even of transient interest. By modifying the age in which he lives, a man may indirectly modify the character of many generations to come. His works may be forgotten while their effects survive.

Marvell's history affords a signal instance of the benefits which may be derived from well-directed satire. There are cases in which it may be a valuable auxiliary to decency, virtue, and religion, where argument and persuasion both fail. Many, indeed, doubt both the legitimacy of the weapon itself, and the success with which it can be employed. But facts are against them. To hope that it can ever supply the place of religion as a radical cure for vice or immorality, would be chimerical; but there are

many pernicious customs, violations of propriety, ridiculous, yet tolerated, follies, which religion can scarcely touch without endangering her dignity. To assail them is one of the most legitimate offices of satire; nor is there the slightest doubt that the 'Spectator' did more to abate many of the prevailing follies and pernicious customs of the age, than a thousand homilies. This, however, may be admitted, and yet it may be said that it does not reach the case of Marvell and Parker. Society, it may be argued, will bear the exposure of its own evils with great equanimity, and perhaps profit by it; no individual being pointed at, and each being left to digest his own lesson under the pleasant conviction that it was designed principally for his neighbours. As corporations will perpetrate actions of which each individual member would be ashamed, so corporations will listen to charges which every individual member would regard as insults. But no man, it is said, is likely to be reclaimed from error or vice by being made the object of merciless ridicule. All this we believe most true. But then it is not to be forgotten, that it may not be the satirist's object to reclaim the individual—he may have little hope of that—he may write for the sake of those whom his victim maligns and injures. When the exorcist takes Satan in hand, it is not because he is an Origenist, and "believes in the conversion of the devil,' but in pity to the supposed objects of his malignity. It is much the same when a man like Marvell undertakes to satirise a man like Parker. Even such a man may be abashed and confounded, though he cannot be reclaimed; and if so, the satirist gains his object, and society gets the benefit. Experience fully shows us that there are many men who will be restrained by ridicule long after they are lost to virtue, and that they are accessible to shame when they are utterly inaccessible to argument.

This was just the good that Marvell effected. He made Parker, it is true, more furious; but he diverted,

if he could not turn, the tide of popular feeling, and thus prevented much mischief. Parker, and others like him, were doing all they could to inflame angry passions, to revive the most extravagant pretensions of tyranny, and to preach up another crusade against the nonconformists. Marvell's books were a conductor to the dangerous fluid; if there was any explosion at all, it was an explosion of merriment. 'He had all the laughers on his side,' says Burnet. In Charles II.'s reign, there were few who belonged to any other class; and then, as now, men found it impossible to laugh and be angry at the same time. It is our firm belief, that Marvell did more to humble Parker, and neutralise the influence of his party, by the 'Rehearsal Transprosed,' than he could have done by writing half a dozen folios of polemical divinity; just as Pascal did more to unmask the Jesuits and damage their cause by his 'Provincial Letters,' than had been effected by all the efforts of all their other opponents put together.

But admirable as were Marvell's intellectual endowments, it is his moral worth, after all, which constitutes his principal claim on the admiration of posterity, and which sheds a redeeming lustre on one of the darkest pages of the English annals. Inflexible integrity was the basis of it—integrity by which he has not unworthily earned the glorious name of the 'British Aristides.' With talents and acquirements which might have justified him in aspiring to almost any office, if he could have disburdened himself of his conscience; with wit which, in that frivolous age, was a surer passport to fame than any amount either of intellect or virtue, and which, as we have seen, mollified even the monarch himself in spite of prejudice; Marvell preferred poverty and independence to riches and servility. He had learned the lesson, practised by few in that age, of being content with little—so that he preserved his conscience. He could be poor, but he could not be mean; could starve, but could

not cringe. By economising in the articles of pride and ambition, he could afford to keep what their votaries were compelled to retrench, the necessaries, or rather the luxuries, of integrity and a good conscience. Neither menaces, nor caresses, nor bribes, nor poverty, nor distress, could induce him to abandon his integrity; or even to take an office in which it might be tempted or endangered. He only who has arrived at this pitch of magnanimity, has an adequate security for his public virtue. He who cannot subsist upon a little; who has not learned to be content with such things as he has, and even to be content with almost nothing; who has not learned to familiarise his thoughts to poverty, much more readily than he can familiarise them to dishonour, is not yet free from peril. Andrew Marvell, as his whole course proves, had done this. But we shall not do full justice to his public integrity, if we do not bear in mind the corruption of the age in which he lived; the manifold apostasies amidst which he retained his conscience; and the effect which such wide-spread profligacy must have had in making thousands almost sceptical as to whether there was such a thing as public virtue at all. Such a relaxation in the code of speculative morals is one of the worst results of general profligacy in practice. But Andrew Marvell was not to be deluded; and amidst corruption perfectly unparalleled, he still continued untainted. We are accustomed to hear of his virtue as a truly Roman virtue, and so it was; but it was something more. Only the best pages of Roman history can supply a parallel: there was no Cincinnatus in those ages of her shame which alone can be compared with those of Charles II. It were far easier to find a Cincinnatus during the period of the English Commonwealth, than an Andrew Marvell in the age of Commodus.

The integrity and patriotism which distinguished him in his relations to the Court, also marked all his public conduct. He was evidently most scrupulously

honest and faithful in the discharge of his duty to his constituents; and, as we have seen, punctilious in guarding against any thing which could tarnish his fair fame, or defile his conscience. On reviewing the whole of his public conduct, we may well say that he attained his wish, expressed in the lines which he has written in imitation of a chorus in the Thyestes of Seneca:—

'Climb at *court* for me that will
Tottering favour's pinnacle;
All I seek is to lie still.
Settled in some secret nest,
In calm leisure let me rest,
And, far off the public stage,
Pass away my silent age.
Thus, when without noise, unknown,
I have lived out all my span,
I shall die without a groan,
An old honest countryman.'

He seems to have been as amiable in his private as he was estimable in his public character. So far as any documents throw light upon the subject, the same integrity appears to have been the basis of both. He is described as of a very reserved and quiet temper; but, like Addison (whom in this respect as in some few others he resembled), exceedingly facetious and lively amongst his intimate friends. His disinterested championship of others is no less a proof of his sympathy with the oppressed than of his abhorrence of oppression; and many pleasing traits of amiability occur in his private correspondence, as well as in his writings. On the whole, we think that Marvell's epitaph, strong as the terms of panegyric are, records little more than the truth; and that it was not in the vain spirit of boasting, but in the honest consciousness of virtue and integrity, that he himself concludes a letter to one of his correspondents in the words—

'Disce, puer, virtutem ex me, verumque laborem;
Fortunam ex aliis.'

LUTHER'S CORRESPONDENCE AND CHARACTER.*

THE familiar letters of a great man, if they are sufficiently copious, written on a variety of themes, and really unpremeditated, probably furnish us with more accurate data for estimating his character, than either the most voluminous deliberate compositions, or the largest traditional collections of his conversation. The former will always conceal much which letters will disclose;—will give not only an imperfect, but perhaps false idea of many points of character; and will certainly suggest an exaggerated estimate of all the ordinary habitudes of thought and expression. The latter will often fall as much below the true mean of such a man's merits; and, what is of more consequence, must depend—except in the rare case in which some faithful Boswell continually dogs the heels of genius—on the doubtful authority and leaky memory of those who report it. Letters, on the other hand, if they be copious, unpremeditated, and not intended for the eye of the world, will exhibit the character in all its moods and phases, and by its

* 'Edinburgh Review,' July, 1845.

Dr. Martin Luther's Briefe, Sendschreiben und Bedenken, vollständig aus den verschiedenen Ausgaben seiner Werke und Briefe, aus andern Büchern und noch unbenutzten Handschriften gesammelt. Kritisch und historisch bearbeitet von DR. WILHELM MARTIN LEBERECHT DE WETTE. 5 vols. 8vo. Berlin.

(*Dr. Martin Luther's Entire Correspondence, carefully compiled from the various Editions of his Works and Letters, from other Books, and from Manuscripts as yet private. Edited, with Critical and Historical Notes, by* DR. WILHELM MARTIN LEBERECHT DE WETTE.)

own utterances. While some will disclose to us the habitual states of thought and feeling, and admit us even into the privacy of the heart, others, composed under the stimulus of great emergencies, and in those occasional auspicious expansions of the faculties, which neither come nor cease at our bidding, will furnish no unworthy criterion of what such a mind, even in its most elevated moods, or by its most deliberate efforts, can accomplish.

If ever any man's character could be advantageously studied in his letters, it is surely that of Luther. They are addressed to all sorts of persons, are composed on an immense diversity of subjects, and, as to the mass of them, are more thoroughly unpremeditated, as well as more completely suggested *ex visceribus causæ*, to use the phrase of Cicero, than those of almost any other man. They are also more copious; as copious as those even of his great contemporary Erasmus, to whom letter-writing was equally business and amusement. What appear voluminous collections in our degenerate days — those of Sévigné, Pope, Walpole, Cowper, even of Swift, dwindle in comparison. In De Wette's most authentic and admirable edition, they occupy five very thick and closely printed volumes. The learned compiler, in a preface amusingly characteristic of the literary zeal and indefatigable research of Germany, tells us, that he has unearthed from obscure hiding-places and mouldering manuscripts more than a hundred unprinted letters, and enriched the present collection with their contents. By himself, or his literary agents, he has ransacked 'the treasures of the archives of Weimar, the libraries at Jena, Erfurt, Gotha, Wolfenbüttel, Frankfort-on-the-Maine, Heidelberg, and Basle;' and has received 'precious contributions' from Breslau, Riga, Strasburg, Münich, Zurich, and other places. There are many, no doubt, which time has consigned to oblivion, and perhaps some few which still lie unknown in public or private reposi-

tories — undetected even by the acute literary scent of De Wette, and his emissaries. But there are enough in all conscience to satisfy any ordinary appetite, and to illustrate, if any thing can, the history and character of him who penned them.

Even in a purely literary point of view, these letters are not unworthy of comparison with any thing Luther has left behind him. They contain no larger portion of indifferent Latin, scarcely so much of his characteristic violence and rudeness; while they display in beautiful relief all the more tender and amiable traits of his character, and are fraught with brief but most striking specimens of that intense and burning eloquence for which he was so famed. Very many of them well deserve the admiration which Coleridge (who regretted that selections from them had not been given to the English public) has so strongly expressed. 'I can scarcely conceive,' he says, 'a more delightful volume than might be made from Luther's letters, especially those written from the Wartburg, if they were translated in the simple, sinewy, idiomatic, hearty *mother tongue* of the original. . . . A difficult task I admit.' He is speaking, of course, of Luther's German letters. Almost all, however, from the Wartburg are in Latin.

Of late years they have received considerable attention. M. Michelet, in his very pleasing volumes, in which he has made Luther draw his own portrait, by presenting a series of extracts from his writings, has derived no small portion of his materials from the letters; while all recent historians of the Reformation, especially D'Aubigné and Waddington *, have dug

* We cannot mention the name of Dr. Waddington without thanking him for the gratification we have derived from the perusal of the three volumes of his 'History of the Reformation,' and expressing our hopes that he will soon fulfil his promise of a fourth. Less brilliant than that of D'Aubigné, his work is at least its equal in research, certainly not inferior in the comprehensiveness of its views, or the solidity of its reflections, and in

deep, and with immense advantage, in the same mine. Not only do they form, as De Wette says, 'a diary, as it were, of Luther's life,' 'gleichsam ein Tagebuch seines Lebens;' but they enable us to trace better than in almost any history, because more minutely, the whole early progress of the Reformation.

As we conceive that Luther's character could be nowhere more advantageously studied than in this voluminous correspondence, we propose in the present article to make it the basis of a few remarks on his most prominent intellectual and moral qualities.

No modern author, in our opinion, has done such signal injustice to Luther's intellect as Mr. Hallam, whose excellent and well-practised judgment seems to us, in this instance, to have entirely deserted him. 'Luther's amazing influence on the revolutions of his own age, and on the opinions of mankind, seems,' says he, 'to have produced, as is not unnatural, an exaggerated notion of his intellectual greatness.'* And he then proceeds to reduce it to assuredly very moderate dimensions, founding his judgment principally on Luther's writings.

Now, if Mr. Hallam had been nothing more than a mere critic, we should not have wondered at such a decision. It would have been as natural in that case to misinterpret the genius of Luther as for Mallet to

severe fidelity is perhaps even superior. Not that, in this last respect, we have much to complain of in D'Aubigné; but as he has great skill in the selection and graphic disposition of his materials, so he sometimes sacrifices a little too much to gratify it—as, for example, in the dramatic form he has given to Luther's narrative of his interview with Miltitz (vol. ii. p. 8—12.). There is also a too uniform brilliancy, and too little repose about the style. But it were most ungrateful to deny the rare merits of the work. We only hope its unprecedented popularity may not deprive us of another volume from the pen of Dr. Waddington. His 'History of the Reformation,' is, in our judgment, very superior to his 'Church History,' though that has no inconsiderable merit.

* Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol. i. p. 513.

write the life of Bacon and 'forget that he was a philosopher.' But when we reflect that Mr. Hallam is *not* a mere literary critic, and that whatsoever honours he may have achieved in that capacity, are yet inferior to those which he has attained as a philosophical historian, we confess our astonishment at the low estimate he seems to have formed of Luther's intellect.

This seems to have arisen from contemplating Luther's character too exclusively in the point of view suggested by the literary nature of the work on which the critic was at the time engaged. It is true that the Reformer's mind did not belong exclusively, or even prevailingly, to either of the two principal types with which we more usually associate genius, and which almost divide the page of literary history between them. The one is the prevailingly philosophical temperament, with numberless specific differences; the other, the prevailingly poetical, with differences equally numerous: the passion of the one class of minds is speculative and scientific truth; that of the other, ideal beauty. Yet there is another, and not less imposing, form of human genius, though it does not figure much on the page of literary history, which has made men as illustrious as man was ever made either by depth or subtlety of speculation, — by opulence or brilliancy of fancy. This class of minds unite some of the rarest endowments of the philosophical and poetical temperaments; and though the reason in such men is not such as would have made an Aristotle, nor the imagination such as would have made a Homer, these elements are mingled in such proportions and combinations as render the product — the *tertium quid* — not less wonderful than the greatest expansion of either element alone. To these are superadded some qualities which neither bard nor philosopher ever possessed, and the whole is subjected to the action of an energetic will and powerful passions. Such are the minds which are destined to change the face of the world, to originate or control great revo-

lutions, to govern the actions of men by a sagacious calculation of motives, or to govern their very thoughts by the magical power of their eloquence. They are the stuff out of which great statesmen, great conquerors, great orators, are made;—by the last, however, not meaning the mere 'mob orator,' who attains and preserves a powerful influence by just following the multitude he appears to lead, and who, if popular, is popular in virtue of Swift's receipt for becoming a wise man—that is, by agreeing with whatever any one may say; we mean the man who, if need be, can stem the torrent as well as drift upon it; who, upon occasion, can tell unpalatable truths and yet rivet attention. To be *such* an orator requires many of the qualities of the philosophical statesman—the same deep knowledge of the mechanism of human nature in general, the same keen perception of the motives and feelings of the so-conditioned humanity with which it has to deal, the same ready appreciation of the topics and arguments likely to prevail, the same sagacity in calculating moral causes and effects; and we need not wonder, therefore, that the great statesman and the persuasive orator have so often been found united in the same individual.

Now, to achieve any of the great tasks to which this class of minds seem born; to manage vast and difficult affairs with address, and bring them to an unexpectedly prosperous issue; to know how to seize the critical moment of action with proper decision, or to exercise patience and self-control in waiting for it; to penetrate the springs of human conduct, whether in the genus or the individual; to sway the minds of whole communities, as whole forests bow at once before the voice of the tempest; to comprehend and calculate the interaction of numberless causes and effects; to originate and execute daring enterprises in the face of many obstacles, physical and moral, and not only in the midst of opposite wills and conflicting interests, but often by means of them—all this seems to us to

imply as wonderful a combination of intellectual qualities as that which enables the mathematical analyst to disentangle the intricacies of a transcendental equation, or the metaphysician to speculate profoundly on the freedom of the human will, or the origin of evil. Nor do those who have thus been both authors and actors in the *real* drama of history, appear to us less worthy of our admiration than those who have but imagined what the former have achieved. There are, unquestionably, men who have been as famous for what they have done, as others have been or can be for what they have written.

It is precisely to such an order of genius—whatever his merits or defects as a *writer*—that the intellect of Luther is, in our judgment, to be referred; and, considered in this point of view, we doubt whether it is very possible to exaggerate its greatness. In a sagacious and comprehensive survey of the peculiarities of his position in all the rapid changes of his most eventful history; in penetrating the characters and detecting the motives of those with whom he had to deal; in fertility of expedients; in promptitude of judgment and of action; in nicely calculating the effect of bold measures, especially in great emergencies—as when he burnt the papal bull, and appeared at the Diet of Worms; in selecting the arguments likely to prevail with the mass of men, and in that contagious enthusiasm of character which imbues and inspires them with a spirit like its own, and fills them with boundless confidence in its leadership;—in all these respects, Luther does not appear to us far behind any of those who have played illustrious parts in this world's affairs, or obtained an empire over the minds of their species.

And surely this is sufficient for one man. No one ever denies the intellect of Pericles or Alexander, Cromwell or Napoleon, to be of the highest order, merely because none of these have left ingenious treatises of philosophy, or exquisite strains of poetry,

or exhibited any of the traces either of a calm or beautiful intellect: and in like manner it is enough for Luther to be known as the author of the Reformation.

Such are the original limitations of the human faculties, and so distinct the forms of intellectual excellence, that it is at best but one comparatively little sphere that even the greatest of men is qualified to fill. Take him out of that, and the giant becomes a dwarf—the genius a helpless changeling. Aristotle, though he wrote admirably on rhetoric, would have made, we fear, but an indifferent Demosthenes; and Demosthenes would probably have been but an obscure expounder of the principles of his own art. After making all allowances for the influence of education, and conceding that it is difficult to calculate the condition of any mind under a different training, we are compelled to admit that there are cases, and those usually of minds pre-eminently great in a single department, where the native bias is so strong, that it is beyond the art of all the school-mastering in the world to alter it.

Earnestly contending that Luther's intellect is to be principally regarded in the light we have indicated, we yet must profess our belief, that, even in a purely literary point of view, Mr. Hallam has done him less than justice. When we consider the popular design of his writings, and that they fulfilled it, many of their *apparent* defects will disappear; and when we consider their voluminousness—the rapidity with which they were thrown off—and the overwhelming engagements under the pressure of which they were produced, many *real* defects may well be pardoned. A word or two on each of these topics.

As to their character, they were chiefly designed *ad populum*—addressed to human nature so-and-so conditioned; and whether we look at what history has told us of the state of that public mind to which they appealed, or to their notorious effects, we think it

must be admitted, that they were admirably calculated to accomplish their purpose. It has been already said that we must look in the mind of Luther for the species of greatness which may fairly be expected there, and not for one to which an intellect so constituted could make no pretensions. No man will challenge for him the praise of metaphysical subtlety, or calmness of judgment in dealing with evidence. To neither the one nor the other surely can *he* lay claim, who flatters himself that he has found an escape from the absurdities of transubstantiation in the equal absurdities of consubstantiation; or who thinks himself warranted in setting aside the evidence for the authenticity of the Epistle of James, because he supposes he has found a sentence in it which contradicts his interpretation of an Epistle of Paul, the authenticity of which has no higher evidence. The class of intellects to which we have ventured to refer that of Luther are robust and sagacious, rather than subtle or profound; little fitted for the investigation of abstract truth, and impatient of whatever is not practical; better adapted for a skilful advocacy of principles than for calm investigation of them, and little solicitous, in their exhibition, of philosophic precision or theoretic completeness. Seizing with instinctive sagacity those points which are best calculated to influence the common mind, they are not very ambitious (even if they could attain it) of the praise of a severely logical method. But they well know how to do that for which the mere philosopher in his turn would find himself strangely incapacitated. They estimate precisely the measure of knowledge or of ignorance, the prejudices and the passions of those with whom they have to deal, and pitch the whole tone of argument in unison with it. They judge of arguments, not so much by their abstract value, or even by the degree of force they may have on their own minds, as by the relation in which they are likely to be viewed by others: if necessary, they prefer even a

comparatively feeble argument, if it can be made readily intelligible, and be forcibly exhibited, to a stronger one, if that stronger one be so refined as to escape the appreciation of the common mind.

And such topics they treat with a vivacity and vehemence of which a philosopher would be as incapable as he would be disgusted with the method. He is but too apt, when he assumes the uncongenial office of a popular instructor, to generalise particular statements into their most abstract expression; he resembles the mathematician, who is not satisfied till he has clothed the determinate quantities of arithmetic in the universal symbols of algebra; he must assign each argument its place, not according to its relative weight, but according to his own notions of its abstract conclusiveness; he must adopt the only method which philosophical precision demands, and to violate it would be more than his fastidious taste can prevail upon itself to concede to that vulgar thing—the *practical*.

It is not necessary to institute any comparison as to the comparative value or dignity of the functions of those whose calm intellect best qualifies them to investigate truth, and of those whose prerogative it is to make it triumph, not only over the understandings of men, but over their imaginations and affections; to give it a vivid presence in the heart. It suffices that neither class can be fully equipped for their high tasks without a mental organisation exquisitely adapted to its object, and well worthy of the highest admiration. They are the complements of each other, and neither can be perfect alone. 'The wise in heart,' says Solomon, 'shall be called prudent, but the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.' Truth at the bottom of her well is of about as much use as water there, and is of no avail without some appliances to bring it to the lips of the thirsty.

Those who would do such a man as Luther justice in the perusal of his controversial writings, must bear

such considerations in mind. It must be recollected that they were most of them composed *pro re natâ*,—for the purpose of impressing the popular mind in given circumstances, in an age of great ignorance, barbarism, and coarseness. We are at best not altogether qualified to judge how far they were wisely adapted to their end; but we are convinced that the more carefully the whole relations of Luther and his age are studied, the more will they be found to illustrate his general sagacity, and the less reason will they leave us to wonder at their astonishing success.

Even his positive faults—as for example, his violence of invective and his excessive diffuseness—which we do not deny flowed in a great measure, the one from the vehemence of his nature, and the other from the haste with which he wrote—were often deliberately committed by him as most likely to answer his purpose. We should hesitate to state this, were it not for Luther's repeated and explicit declarations on this very point, in his Letters. We should hesitate, because we are jealous of that biographical prejudice which will still find out that the object of its blind eulogy had some deep design even in the veriest blunders; and that foibles and failings not only 'leaned to virtue's side,' but were themselves virtues.

In both the above points, Luther unquestionably has sins enough to answer for; he is as often tedious and inelegant as offensively coarse. Still,—however it may be thought that we are defending his sagacity at the expense of things quite as valuable, his taste and good feeling,—nothing is clearer, from his own admissions, than that he often committed these faults of set purpose, and with his eyes wide open. Thus he apologises for the diffuseness of certain compositions in his Letters (No. 32. and No. 134.), on the ground that they were designed for the 'rudest ears and understandings.' To the common mind of his day, truths which are to us truisms—which will hardly bear the briefest expression—which, in fact, are so

familiar that they are forgotten — were startling novelties. The populace required, in his judgment, 'line upon line, and precept upon precept;' not only 'here a little and there a little,' but here and there, and every where, a great deal. The same apology is required for the diffuseness of other theologians of that day, of far severer intellect, and much more elegance — Calvin and Melancthon, for example. As to his arrogant tone and rude invective, though both were natural expressions of the enthusiasm and vehemence of his character, they also were systematically adopted, and were both no doubt, upon the whole, most subservient to his purpose. Timidity and irresolution would have been his ruin. On the other hand, his self-reliance and fearlessness — the grandeur and dilation of his carriage — his very contempt of his adversaries — all tended to give courage and confidence to those who possessed them not, and to inspire his party with his own spirit. His voice never failed to act like a trumpet-call upon the hearts of his followers — to reassure them when depressed, and to rally them when defeated. No other tone, no other language, could have had the same effect. Considering his position, there is a sort of sublimity in his audacity. 'I know and am certain,' says he to Spalatin (1521), 'that Jesus Christ our Lord lives and reigns; and, buoyant in this knowledge and confidence, I will not fear a hundred thousand popes.' 'My doctrines will stand,' says he the following year, in his reply to King Henry, 'and the Pope will fall in spite of all the powers of air, earth, hell. They have provoked me to war; they shall have it. They scorned the peace I offered them — peace they shall have no longer. God shall look to it; which of the two shall first retire from the struggle — the Pope or Luther!' Five hundred such expressions might be cited. On the whole, we are disposed to acquiesce in the judgment of Dr. Waddington, expressed in relation to the last-mentioned work of the Reformer: — 'I have no

question,' says he, 'that the cause of Luther was, upon the whole, advanced and recommended even by the temerity of his unsparing invective; and that, had he given less offence to his enemies, he would have found less zeal, less courage, and far less devotion in his friends.'*

It is not uninstructive to hear Luther in some of his Letters defending *on plan* the vehemence of his invective. 'I am determined,' he says in his reply to King Henry, 'to assume, day by day, a loftier and loftier tone against these senseless little tyrants, and to meet their madness with a madness like their own.' 'I suppress many things,' he writes to Spalatin as early as 1519, 'for the sake of the Elector and the University, which I would otherwise pour out against Rome—that destroyer alike of Scripture and the Church. It cannot be that the truth respecting either can be treated without giving offence to that wild beast. Do not hope that I shall keep quiet and safe, unless you wish to see me abandon theology altogether. Let your friends think me mad if they will.'† 'What is it to me,' he says to Spalatin in his account of the Leipsic disputation—'what is it to me if I speak rashly and offensively, if I but speak truth, and that Catholic truth? . . . Why, it was always so; truth has ever been rash, bitter, seditious, offensive. . . . What is it to me that the Thomists are offended with truth? It is sufficient for me that it is neither heretical nor erroneous.'‡ 'I knew,' he says to Spalatin in 1522, 'that whatever I might write against the King of England would offend many, but I chose to do it—*sed ita placuit mihi*—and many causes rendered it necessary.'§ And to another friend (unknown), in August of the same year, he says, 'My gracious prince and many other friends

* History of the Reformation, vol. ii. p. 32.
† De Wette, vol. i. p. 260.
‡ Ibid. pp. 300, 301. § Ibid. vol. ii. p. 244.

have often admonished me on this subject; but my answer is that I will not comply, nor ought I. My cause is not a cause of middle measures (*ein mittel-handel*), in which one may concede or give way, even as I, like a fool, have hitherto done.'* Few readers of Luther, however, will think there was much reason for this self-accusation.

It will not be supposed for a moment that we are apologists for his too habitual virulence and ferocity of invective. Not even the spirit of the age can form an apology for them; though in all fairness it ought to be remembered, that so completely were these offensive qualities of controversy characteristic of it, that then, and long after, they were exhibited by men who had neither Luther's vehement passions, nor his provocations to plead in extenuation; often so unconsciously indeed, that the refined and equable Thomas More imitates and transcends the Reformer's coarseness, even while he reproves it.

But whatever the defects and inequalities of Luther's writings, there is one quality not unsparingly displayed, which ought to have protected him from so low an estimate as Mr. Hallam seems to have formed —we mean his *eloquence;* for which he was famed by all his contemporaries—which he was not grudgingly admitted to possess even by his enemies—and which still lives in numberless passages of his writings to justify their eulogiums. Yet Mr. Hallam says, that in his judgment, Luther's Latin works at least, 'are not marked by any striking ability, and still less by any impressive eloquence.' Surely he must have been thinking only of the moderate Latinity when he used the last expression; for unquestionably the *soul* of eloquence is often there, however rugged the form. Far more justly speaks Frederic Schlegel. 'Luther,' says he, 'displays a most original eloquence, surpassed by few names that occur in the whole history

* De Wette, vol. ii. p. 244.

of literature. He had, indeed, all those properties which render a man fit to be a revolutionary orator.' If this be so, the intellect of Luther must be regarded as one of the rarest phenomena which appear in the world of mind. Such, at least, has been hitherto the uniform judgment of criticism. To possess a genius for consummate eloquence is always considered to imply intellectual excellence of the highest order; and, whether we consider the paucity of examples of such genius, or how various, how exquisitely balanced and adjusted are the powers which must equip the truly great orator, we shall see no reason whatever to quarrel with this judgment. So peculiar are the required modifications and combinations of intellect, imagination, and passion, that it may be pretty safely averred we shall as soon see the reproduction of an Aristotle as of a Demosthenes.

All the prime elements of this species of mental power, Luther seems to have possessed in perfection. It has been admitted that he had not a mind well fitted for the investigation of abstract truth; but he had what was to him of more importance—great practical sagacity, and vast promptitude and vigour of argument. His imagination, though as little solicitous about the abstractly beautiful, as his reason about the abstractly speculative, was fertile of those brief, homely, energetic images which are most effective in real eloquence; and in intensity and vehemence of passion, even Demosthenes was not his superior. His native language he wrote with the utmost force; and, when he pleased, no one could express himself with a more pregnant brevity. To the continuous excellence, the consummate taste, the exquisite finish, the minute graces of him who 'fulmined over Greece,' Luther, it is true, had no pretensions;—as indeed might be expected, considering the circumstances and the age in which his intellect was developed: but in every part of his controversial works, most frequently in his briefer writings, as in his 'Appeal to a Future Coun-

cil,' his 'Babylonish Captivity,' his 'Appeal to the German Nobility,' and not least in his Letters, occur frequent bursts of the most vivid and impassioned eloquence. He abounds in passages, which, even at this distance of time, make our hearts throb within us as we read them. Such is that expression with which he defied the sentence of excommunication. 'As they have excommunicated me in defence of their sacrilegious heresy, so do I excommunicate them on behalf of the holy truth of God; and let Christ, our judge, decide whether of the two excommunications has the greater weight with him.' Such is that memorable sentence with which he dropped the papal bull into the flames, and which, even from his lips, would, a few years before, have thrilled the assembled multitudes with horror. 'As thou hast troubled and put to shame the Holy One of the Lord, so be thou troubled and consumed in the eternal fires of hell.' Such, above all, is that noble declaration with which he concluded his defence at Worms. 'Since your majesty requires of me a simple and direct answer, I will give one, and it is this:—I cannot submit my faith either to popes or councils, since it is clear as noonday that they have often erred, and even opposed one another. If, then, I am not confuted by Scripture, or by cogent reasons . . . . I neither can nor will retract any thing; for it cannot be right for a Christian to do any thing against his conscience. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me.' This eloquence, indeed, is transient; it flashes out, like the lightning, for an instant, and again withdraws into the cloud. But it is lightning that blasts and scathes wherever it strikes.

The influence which Luther's eloquence exerted over his contemporaries is testified, not only by the deference with which he was listened to by those who were predisposed to applaud—a very inadequate criterion of merit—but by the profound attention which he was able to command, even from those who were

hostile and alienated. This was seen, not only on great occasions, as at Worms—not only in the enthusiasm with which he had imbued a whole nation—but by the success with which he performed the equally difficult task of restraining the fanatical excesses of some of his own followers. When, under the leadership of the acute but impetuous Carlstadt, some of them had been induced, during his residence at the Wartburg, to outrun Luther's zeal, and to do what he admitted might be right to be done, but in a wrong spirit—with violence and uncharitableness—all eyes were directed to Luther as the only man who could appease the tumult. Braving all personal danger, and in defiance of the wishes of the Elector himself, he descended from his retreat, and all was quiet again. For many successive days he preached against the innovators, though without mentioning Carlstadt's name, and his progress was one continued triumph. It is true that, in his subsequent visit to Orlamund, he had not the same success; but, in addition to his being in the wrong on the Sacramentarian question, Carlstadt was at that spot regarded as another Luther.

Of the briefer compositions of Luther, few are more eloquent than the letter he addressed to Frederic, when the Legate Cajetan wrote to urge that prince to abandon the hated monk to the tender mercies of Rome. In this remarkable composition, which was thrown off on the same day in which he received the legate's letter, he assures Frederic that he would prefer exile, to protection at the peril of his prince's safety. The nobility of mind, the magnanimity it displays, are well worthy of Luther; but without denying them, we cannot but think that the whole letter, as well as that to Spalatin on the same occasion, is constructed with consummate skill; and that, while resolving on that course which his own bold and lofty spirit prompted, he has introduced all those topics which were likely either to move the sympathy, or alarm the pride, of the prince. 'If we praise his

magnanimity,' says Dr. Waddington, 'we must at the same time admire his forethought and discretion.' The very pathos is irresistible. 'I am waiting your strictures,' says he to Spalatin, though the letter was, of course, intended for his master's eye, 'on the answer that I have sent to the legate's letter, unless you think it unworthy of any reply. But I am looking daily for the anathemas from Rome, and setting all things in order; so that, when they arrive, I may go forth prepared and girded like Abraham, ignorant whither I shall go—nay, rather, well assured whither—for God is every where.'*

One brief passage in this letter, not given by Waddington, and sadly mutilated by D'Aubigné, seems to us most happily conceived and expressed. Cajetan had urged the Elector to give up the monk, but contents himself with simply averring his 'certain knowledge' of his guilt. Luther thus replies:—'But this I cannot endure, that my accuser should endeavour to make my most sagacious and prudent sovereign play the part of another Pilate. When the Jews brought Christ before that ruler, and were asked, "What accusation they preferred, and what evil the man had done?" they said, "If he had not been a malefactor, we would not have delivered him to thee." So this most reverend legate, when he has presented brother Martin, with many injurious speeches, and the prince possibly asks, "What has the little brother done?" will reply, "Trust me, illustrious prince, I speak the truth from certain knowledge, and not from opinion." *I* will answer for the prince—"Let *me* know this certain knowledge; let it be committed to writing; formed into letters; and when this is done, I will send brother Martin to Rome, or rather I will seize and slay him myself; then I will consult my honour, and leave not a stain upon my fair fame. But as long as that "certain knowledge" shuns the

* De Wette, vol. i. p. 188.

light, and appears only in assertions, . . . I cannot trust myself in the dark." . . . Thus would *I* answer him, illustrious prince. But your far-famed sagacity needs neither instructor nor prompter.'*

Of Cajetan, during the negotiations with him, he writes to Carlstadt — 'The legate will not permit me to make either a public or private defence. His wish, so he says, is to act the part of a father, rather than of a judge; and yet he will listen to nothing from me but the words, "I recant and acknowledge my error" — and these words will I never utter. . . He styles me, "*sein lieben Sohn.*" . . . . I know how little that means. Still, I doubt not I should be most acceptable and beloved if I would but speak the single word *revoco.* But I will not become a heretic by renouncing the faith which has made me a Christian. Sooner would I be banished — burnt — excommunicated.'† In the same lofty spirit of faith he eloquently exclaims, in a passage not cited by Waddington or D'Aubigné, 'Let who will be angry,—of an impious silence will not *I* be found guilty, who am conscious that I am "a debtor to the truth," howsoever unworthy. Never without blood, never without danger, has it been possible to assert the cause of Christ; but, as he died for us, so, in his turn, he demands that, by confession of his name, we should die for him. "The servant is not greater than his Lord." "If they have persecuted me," he himself tells us, "they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."'‡

Passages such as these are constantly occurring in Luther's letters; and if they contain not the elements of eloquence, we profess that we are yet to seek the meaning of the term.

And even if Luther's writings were less fraught with the traces of a vigorous intellect than they are,

* De Wette, vol. i. pp. 183, 184. † Ibid. p. 161.
‡ Ibid. p. 334.

there are two achievements of his, the like of which were never performed except where there was great genius. First, such was his mastery over his native language, that, under his plastic hand and all-subduing energy, it ceased to be a rugged and barbarous dialect almost unfit for the purposes of literature;— for which, indeed, he may be said to have created it. Secondly, he achieved, almost single-handed, the translation of the whole Scriptures; and (whatever the faults which necessarily arose from the defective scholarship of the age) with such idiomatic strength and racy energy, that his version has ever been the object of universal veneration, and is unapproachable by any which has since appeared. The enthusiasm with which such a man as Frederic Schlegel speaks of it, shows that, in the eye of those who are most capable of judging, it is felt to have immense merit.

In estimating the genius of Luther, as reflected in his writings, it is impossible to leave wholly out of consideration their quantity, the rapidity with which they were composed, and the harassing duties amidst which they were produced. He died at the no very advanced age of sixty-two, and yet his collected works amount to seven folio volumes. His correspondence alone fills five bulky octavos.

When we reflect that these works were not the productions of retired leisure, but composed amidst all the oppressive duties and incessant interruptions of a life like his, we pause aghast at the energy of character which they display; and wonder that that busy brain and ever-active hand could sustain their office so long. Of the distracting variety and complication of his engagements, he gives us, in more than one of his letters, an amusing account. Their very contents, indeed, bear witness to them. The centre and mainspring of the whole great movement —the principal counsellor in great emergencies—the referee in disputes and differences amongst his own

party — solicited for advice alike by princes, and scholars, and pastors, on all sorts of matters, public and private — having the 'care of all the churches,' and beset at the same time by a host of inveterate and formidable adversaries — the wonder is, not that he discharged many of his duties imperfectly, but that he could find time to discharge them at all. Not only are there numberless letters on all the ordinary themes of condolence and congratulation — of recommendation on behalf of poor scholars and pastors — of advice to distant ministers and churches in matters of ecclesiastical order and discipline; but letters sometimes affording whimsical proofs of the triviality of the occasions on which his aid was sought, and the patience with which it was given. Now he replies to a country parson who wanted to know how to manage the exordium and peroration of his sermons; now to a worthy prior to tell him the best mode of keeping his conventual accounts — that he may know precisely how much 'beer' and 'wine' — '*cerevisia et vinum*' — was consumed in the *hospitium* and 'refectory' respectively*; now to make arrangements for the wedding festival of a friend; now to plead the cause of a maiden of Torgau, whose betrothed (no less than the Elector's own barber) had given her the slip.†

The very style of the Letters bears evidence to the pressure of duty under which they were written. Most of the shorter ones are expressed with a brevity, a business-like air, which reminds us of nothing so much as the style of a merchant's counting-house.

Of the variety of his engagements, even before the conflict of his life commenced (1516), he says to his friend John Lange — 'I could find employment almost for two amanuenses; I do scarcely any thing all day but write letters, so that I know not whether I may not be writing what I have already written: — you will see. I am conventual preacher, chaplain, pastor,

* De Wette, vol. i. p. 23. † Ibid. vol. ii. p. 317.

and parish minister, director of studies, vicar of the priory, that is, prior eleven times over, inspector of the fisheries at Litzkau, counsel to the inns of Herzeberg in Torgau, lecturer on Paul, and expounder of the Psalms.' At a later period he found there might be engagements yet heavier than these. In excuse of an absurd blunder in translating a Hebrew word, he writes (1521)—'I was distracted and occupied, as often happens, with various thoughts. I am one of the busiest of men: I preach twice a-day; I am compiling the Psalter, labouring at the postils, replying to my adversaries, assailing the bull both in Latin and German, and defending myself, to say nothing of writing letters,' &c.* 'I would have written to both our friends,' he says to James Strauss (1524), 'but it is incredible with what business I am overwhelmed, so that I can scarcely get through my letters alone. The whole world begins to press me down, so that I could even long to die, or be translated' —'*opto vel mori vel tolli.*'†

These last two passages, not cited by D'Aubigné or Waddington, perhaps better illustrate the pressure of his duties than the first, which they both have given.

When, in addition to all this, we take into account the promptitude of his pen, and that his antagonists seldom had to wait long for an answer, we cannot be surprised that much which he wrote should have inadequately represented his mental powers.

Nor is mere bulk to be left out of consideration in estimating the vigour of his intellect; for, though it is itself no criterion of genius—many of the most voluminous writers having been amongst the worst and dullest—yet if we find large fragments of such writings richly veined with gold, however impure the ore in which it is discovered, we may reasonably infer that, if their authors had written less and with

* De Wette, vol. i. p. 554. † Ibid. vol. ii. p. 505.

more elaboration, they would have left behind them far less equivocal monuments of their genius; and thus, in the estimate of its true dimensions, the *quantity* of what they have written becomes an essential element. This consideration ought, in all fairness, to be applied, not only to Luther, but to all his great contemporaries, and to all the theologians of any eminence in the succeeding age. They wrote with far too great rapidity and frequency to do themselves full justice. The gold of genius is in their works, but spread out thin; its essence is there, but undistilled; in the shape of a huge pile of leaves, not in a little phial of liquid perfume.

None can be more deeply convinced that the hasty and voluminous writings of Luther afforded but an inadequate index of his powers than was Luther himself. This is evident from his own estimate of his writings, formed at the close of life, and expressed in the general preface to his collected works. He there laments the hurry in which they had often been composed, and the want of accuracy and method which distinguishes them. He even speaks of them in terms of unjust depreciation, and declares, no doubt in sincerity, but in strange ignorance of himself, his willingness that they should be consigned to oblivion, and other and better works which had subsequently appeared, substituted in their place. The following are sentences from this memorable preface:—'Multum diuque restiti illis qui meos libros, *seu verius confusiones mearum lucubrationum* voluerunt editas, tum quod nolui antiquorum labores meis novitatibus obrui, et lectorem a legendis illis impediri, tum quod nunc, Dei gratia, exstant methodici libri quam plurimi. . . . . His rationibus adductus, cupiebam *omnes libros meos* perpetuâ oblivione sepultos, ut melioribus esset locus.'

But whatever the merits of Luther's writings, it has been already admitted that it is not in them that we recognise the chief evidences of the power and compass

of his intellect. His pretensions to be considered one of the great minds of his species, are more truly, as well as more wisely, rested on his actions; — on the skill and conduct which he displayed through all the long conflict with his gigantic adversary, and the ineffaceable traces which he left of himself on the mind of his age, and on that of all succeeding ages. The more his position at various periods is studied, and the deeper the insight into the history of his times, the more obvious, we are persuaded, will appear his practical sagacity, the soundness as well as promptitude of his judgment, the wisdom as well as boldness of his measures. It will be seen, too, that in not a few instances his very boldness was itself wisdom.

From his first encounter with Tetzel, and the appearance of the celebrated Theses, to the Diet of Worms, and his abduction to the Wartburg, his history is perhaps as eventful as that of any man has ever been; and it is impossible, we think, not to see that he conducted his arduous enterprise with infinite address, as well as energy. Again and again did his formidable enemy, unfamiliar with defeat — before whom every antagonist had for ages been crushed — exhaust her power, her menaces, her flatteries, her arts, in vain. For the first time, her famed diplomacy, her proverbial craft, were at fault; nuncios and legates returned bootless to their papal master. Cajetan, and Miltitz, and Eck, and Aleander were all foiled at their own weapons. But he displayed his singular sagacity not more strongly by his address in these negotiations, and in the fertile expedients by which he frustrated or parried the efforts of his enemies, than in his quick perception of the turning-points of the great controversy, and the judicious positions in which he intrenched himself accordingly.

Let us be permitted to remind the reader of a few instances. Against the usurping and all-presuming spirit of Rome, he opposed the counter principle of the absolute supremacy of Scripture, and to every

clamorous demand for retractation, replied to legates, nuncios, Diets, alike, 'Let my errors be first proved by *that* authority.' Nothing is more frequently iterated by him than this maxim, which he often lays down with a brief energy which reminds us of the celebrated sentence of Chillingworth.

Aware that this principle involved another equally opposed to the jealous policy of Rome, he foresaw the immense importance to his cause of placing the Bible in every body's hands; and promptly providing the means as well as foreseeing the results, he toiled day and night till he had unlocked for the people the treasures of Scripture in his own rich and idiomatic version. If he did not always *consistently* pursue this principle to its extreme limits, and practically assert the right of private judgment, yet he admitted it in theory. Such expressions as the following will prove this:—'The right of inquiring and judging concerning matters of faith belongs to all Christians, and to each; and so absolutely, that cursed be he who would abridge this right by a single hair's-breadth.'*

In opposition to that system of spiritual barter, which formed the essence of Romanism, and by which it had so deeply degraded the gospel, he arrayed, sometimes too paradoxically it is true, the forgotten doctrine of justification by faith.

Perceiving that the dominion of Rome was founded in ignorance, and that his constant appeal must be to the intelligence of the people, he laboured incessantly to promote the interests of learning and the diffusion of knowledge; and did much by his enlightened advocacy to give the Reformation one of its most glorious characteristics—its close alliance with scholarship and science.† Deeply disgusted with that scholastic phi-

* Cont. Reg. Angliæ, L. Op., vol. ii. p. 532.

† This is fully proved by citations from Luther's writings given by D'Aubigné, vol. iii. pp. 236—243. Luther's truly enlarged views on this subject are also frequently disclosed in his correspondence.

losophy, which, without being perhaps fully versed in it, he knew to be a main pillar of the Romish system, he not only laboured to supplant it by a scriptural theology, but was scarcely less anxious than Erasmus himself that polite letters should be substituted in its stead. An equally decisive example of his sagacity is to be seen in the uniform repudiation of physical force as fatal to his cause; the more remarkable, when we reflect on the impetuosity of his own character, and the notions of that age—an age when violence was so familiar, and almost the sole, as it was the most welcome, instrument of all revolutions. He consistently asserted the moral power of truth throughout his whole career, even when the menaces of his enemies seemed to justify an opposite course, and when the indiscreet zeal of some of his friends, more especially Philip, landgrave of Hesse*, Sickingen, and Von Hutten were impatient to try sharper weapons than those of argument. In January 1521, (not June, as stated by Dr. Waddington,) he writes to Spalatin—'You see what Hutten wants. But I am averse to strive for the gospel by violence and bloodshed. By the word of God was the world subdued, by that word has the Church been preserved, and by that word shall it also be repaired.'† 'I hear,' he writes to Melancthon from the Wartburg, 'that an attack has been made at Erfurdt on the houses of the priests. I wonder that the senate has permitted or connived at it, and that Prior Lange has been silent. For though it is well that these impious adversaries should be restrained, yet the mode of doing it must bring re-

* If Luther had as strongly resisted every other erring impulse of this impetuous prince, he would have escaped the heaviest imputation on his character. But, alas! the document in which, for *state reasons*, Luther, and Melancthon, and Bucer, and others, sanctioned Philip in *bigamy*—dispensing, in *his* case, with what they *admitted* to be a general law of Christian morals—remains; and can be read only with grief and shame.

† De Wette, vol i. p. 543.

proach and a just defeat upon the gospel.'* 'We have a right to speak,' he firmly admonished the rash innovators, who had begun to demolish images and windows, 'but none whatever to compel. Let us preach; the rest belongs to God. If I appeal to force, what shall I gain? Grimace, forced uniformity, and hypocrisy. But there will be no hearty sincerity, no faith, no love. Where these are wanting, all are wanting; and I would not give a straw for such a victory.'

We all know that it was not for want of courage that Luther adopted this pacific course. The fearlessness with which he faced the plague in 1516, saying, 'the world will not perish because brother Martin falls,' followed him through life. It is a noble trait of his character, that on the above occasion he sent the students away, though he persisted in not quitting his post himself; and, on a subsequent occasion, he was anxious that his friend Melancthon should not imitate his own heroism. 'Obsecro,' he writes to Spalatin, (1521), 'ne Philippus maneat, si pestis irruat.'

Nor was his sagacity less shown in much of the by-play of the great drama. On his letter to Frederic, and the skill with which he pleaded his cause, even while he seemed to abandon it, we have already touched. Let us take another instance. The centre of a stupendous revolution, surrounded by enthusiastic spirits, an enthusiast himself, it is astonishing how free, for the most part, he kept himself and his followers from practical fanaticism.† When Mark

* De Wette, vol. ii. pp. 7. 8.

† We, of course, do not mean to assert that Luther was always thus *personally* superior to spiritual illusion. His reputed encounters with the devil at the Wartburg are quite sufficient to disprove this. But the example of Cromwell and many others may teach us that religious enthusiasm, or even fanaticism, is not inconsistent with the deepest practical sagacity and the wisest conduct of affairs. We are also disposed to think, that very many of the expressions on which this species of illusion has been charged on Luther, are but strong tropical modes of representing

Stubner and his associates appeared at Wittemberg with their confident claims to revelation, during Luther's residence at the Wartburg, even Melancthon wavered. Luther remained firm: he adhered to his great principle of the supremacy of the Scriptures, disclaimed all new revelations, and declared that any messenger from God must prove his commission by the only credentials — the power of working miracles. He, at the same time, adhered to another equally

those internal conflicts of which every Christian is sensible, but which few have waged with so intense an agony as himself. The incidents at the Wartburg cannot be thus accounted for. But none will be surprised at these who will peruse the accounts he himself gives of his health, in the letters written from that place. Deep solitude, unwonted diet, prolonged sleeplessness, intense anxiety, had evidently produced the most extensive derangement of all the digestive processes. The distressing 'tinnitus capitis' of which he complains, as well as other exquisitely painful symptoms to which we cannot more particularly advert, show the condition he was in. No physician reading certain sentences (vol. ii. pp. 2. 6. 17. 22.) would wonder at any fancies in which Luther's hypochondriacal imagination might indulge; or that, in his case, those fancies took the direction of his habitual thoughts. The same hypochondriacal symptoms often appeared subsequently; and they are, as might be expected, generally associated with religious depression.

On the subject of Luther's spiritual encounters (as well as on some other interesting points of his history) we beg to refer the reader to some remarks in an article in this journal (vol. lxix. p. 273.) since claimed, and reprinted with others, by its accomplished author, Sir J. Stephen. Had that admirable essay been seen when this was composed (an interval of seven years elapsed between the appearance of the two), it is probable that the latter would never have seen the light. On comparison, however, it will be found, as usually happens when two writers, however inferior one may be to the other, independently meditate the same subject, that the topics selected are far from being always the same. With a general harmony of views, the points principally insisted upon in the one essay are not those which are chiefly treated in the other. The magnitude of the theme sufficiently accounts for this: so spacious and rich a field as Luther's genius would still leave enough to fill the sheaf of a humble gleaner like myself, even after the sickle of so able a reaper as my accomplished friend had been employed upon it.

sound principle, and declared that these fanatics ought not to be subjected to persecution.—In the deplorable 'war of the peasants,' we have similar proofs of his penetration. He pleaded for a timely redress of many of their wrongs, and foretold the consequences of neglecting them. But when the people commenced their horrid excesses, he advocated with superfluous, and even rabid violence, the adoption of the severest measures of chastisement. Some of his expressions, indeed, are perfectly shocking; and we can only account for their vehemence by supposing, that foreseeing—what was actually the case—that the popular excesses would be malignantly attributed to the Reformation itself, he was determined to anticipate slander, and provide, as he has done by even an ostentatious opposition, for the defence of himself and his adherents.

The same singular sagacity is seen in the temperate manner in which he attempted to realise the results of the Reformation, and to reconstruct the edifice he had demolished. He was no violent iconoclast — no wholesale innovator like Carlstadt. But we need say nothing on this head; the subject has been beautifully noticed by D'Aubigné in the commencement of his third volume; where he shows, that the impression that Luther was a rash, headlong revolutionist, is altogether erroneous.

But it may be further asserted, that in the most audacious actions of his life, that very audacity, in the majority of instances, was itself wisdom. Take, for example, his letter from the Wartburg to Albert, archbishop of Mayence, commanding, rather than beseeching, him not to revive the infamous Indulgences. We do not defend the taste or decency of the style; but the result proved that Luther knew his man. It was followed by a reply as deferential as if the monk had been the archbishop, and the archbishop the monk. It was on this occasion that he used some most remarkable expressions to Spalatin,

who had enjoined silence, and who had enforced his injunctions by those of Frederic: — 'I have seldom read more unwelcome letters than your last,' he writes; 'so that I not only delayed to reply, but had determined not to reply at all. I will not bear what you have said, that the Prince will not suffer the Archbishop to be written to, and that the public peace must not be disturbed. I will rather lose you — the Prince, and every creature on earth. If I have resisted the Archbishop's creator, the Pope — shall I succumb to the Pope's creature? . . . . Non sic, Spalatine; non sic, Princeps. . . . . I am resolved not to listen to you; fixum est, te non auditum iri.'*

In like manner, his 'Appeal to a Future Council,' prepared while awaiting the fulmination of the bull, but surreptitiously published before it came, (as Luther expressly affirms,) brought thousands to his standard; and still more may be said for those bold and unsparing invectives against the abuses of Rome, in the 'Babylonish Captivity,' and in the 'Address to the German Nobility.' It may be similarly asserted, that no measure whatever could have been so critically well-timed as that most decisive one of committing the decretals and entire pontifical code to the flames, and crowning the hecatomb with the formidable bull itself. It is not only one of the most striking events of history, and exhibits the chief actor in an attitude truly sublime, but was a most felicitous and politic expedient. It is curious, however, to hear Luther admitting, in his correspondence, that even *his* heart sometimes misgave him before the performance of that most significant act. 'I burnt the papal books and the bull,' he writes to Staupitz, a month after, 'with trembling and prayer; but I am now better pleased with that act than with any other of my whole life.'†

* De Wette, vol. ii. p. 94. † Ibid. vol. i. p. 543.

The same wisdom marked the courageous obstinacy with which, in spite of entreaties, intimidations, and sickness, he persisted in presenting himself at the Diet of Worms. He alone, of all his party, seemed duly to appreciate the importance, the necessity, of that act to the safety of his great enterprise. At that critical moment, advance as well as retreat was full of danger; but the path of true policy, as well as of true magnanimity, was to advance. His obstinacy at this crisis has something absolutely sublime about it. While his enemies, more perspicacious than his friends, distrusted, and at last dreaded, his appearance, employed all sorts of machinations to deter him, and plainly hinted that the road to Worms was the road to destruction;—while his friends, with a terrible remembrance of the fate of Huss, to whom even the Imperial safe-conduct had been no protection, painted, in appalling colours, the certain martyrdom to which he was exposing himself, Luther remained inflexible. The repeated and varied forms in which he energetically expressed his purpose, showed the importance he attached to the act, and the obstinacy with which he had resolved upon it. Two are well known:—'Should they light a fire which should blaze as high as heaven, and reach from Wittemberg to Worms, at Worms I will still appear.' 'Though there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the houses, in would I go—*noch woll ich hinein.*' But his letters written on his progress thither, abound in expressions of the same inflexibility. 'We come, my Spalatin,' he writes from Frankfort. . . . 'We will enter Worms in spite of all the gates of hell, and all the powers of the air.'* 'Will you go on?' said the imperial herald to him at Weimar, where they were placarding the Imperial edict against him. 'I will,' replied Luther, 'though I should be put under interdict in every town—I will go on.'

* De Wette, vol. i. p. 587.

And his appearance and language at Worms did more to promote the cause of the Reformation than any other act, whether of preceding or succeeding years. He himself, as he repeatedly intimates in his correspondence, had serious apprehensions that his career would terminate at Worms, and evidently left it with much of the same feeling with which a man might find that he had got safely out of a lion's den. There is an obvious tone of hilarity in the letters dated immediately after his departure from the Diet, which contrasts oddly enough with regrets that he must escape, in temporary concealment, the honours of martyrdom. Witness the following to Luke Cranach, the painter, in which he ludicrously characterises the proceedings of the Diet with all the point, brevity, and sarcastic energy, which he could so well assume:— 'I thought that his Imperial Majesty would have summoned some doctor, or some fifty, and eloquently confuted the monk. But nothing more is done than just this, "Are these books thine?" "Yes." "Will you retract them or not?" "No." "Then get about your business." *So heb dich.*'

During the sittings of the celebrated Diet of Augsburg, (held nearly ten years after that of Worms,) Luther, it is well known, was persuaded to remain at Coburg, whence he watched with intense and, as his letters at this period so often testify, impatient interest, the proceedings of his less prompt and perspicacious colleagues. On this occasion he showed his thorough knowledge of the treacherous and crafty policy, the spirit of subtle intrigue, which had so often characterised Rome; those 'Italian arts'— *Italitates*, as he designates them, when speaking so many years before of the feigned cordialities of the Nuncio Miltitz, — which he dreaded for Melancthon more than violence, and of which the papal diplomacy was never more prodigal than on this occasion. While the timid Melancthon was 'cutting and contriving' to perform impossibilities, to find a common

measure of incommensurables — 'sewing new cloth upon old garments, and putting new wine into old bottles' — striving to diminish to an invisible line the interval between some of the doctrines of his adversaries and his own, and adopting all sorts of little artifices and convenient ambiguities of expression, to show the harmony of doctrines which must be eternally discordant — Luther boldly remonstrates against a policy so ruinous; assures him that, whatever the apparent pliability of Rome, nothing but absolute submission would satisfy her imperious spirit; and that the true policy of the Reformers was what it had ever been — that of uncompromising firmness. In the most energetic language, he denounces the vanity of all projects of verbal compromise; refuses all participation in acts which should have that object; and threatens to shiver in atoms any league by which Rome and Luther should be bound together. 'I have received your Apology,' he writes to Melancthon, 'and wonder what you mean when you ask, What and how much should be conceded to the Pope? For myself, more than enough has already been conceded in that Apology; and if they refuse that, I see not what more I can possibly grant them:' * And shortly after, 'For myself, I will not yield a hair's-breadth, or suffer any thing to be restored. I will rather endure every extremity. Let the Emperor do as he will:' † And again, two days after, to Spalatin, 'Hope not for agreement. If the Emperor will publish an edict, let him. *He published one at Worms!*' ‡ 'Should it come to pass,' he writes to the same friend a month after, 'that you concede any thing plainly against the gospel, and enclose that eagle in a vile sack, Luther (never doubt it) — Luther will come, and, in a magnificent fashion, set the noble bird free.' § M. D'Aubigné's work has not yet ‖ reached this period;

* De Wette, vol. iv. p. 52.
† Ibid. p. 88.
‡ Ibid. p. 92.
§ Ibid. p. 155.
‖ This was written in 1845.

but there are no letters of Luther more interesting than the series which relate to the proceedings of this memorable Diet.

With such talents for the conduct of affairs, we need not wonder that the prudent Frederic so often sought his counsels; that Melancthon should have so eulogised his sagacity in his funeral panegyric; or that Cajetan should have wished to decline further encounters with him. 'I will have nothing more to do with this beast, for he has deep-set eyes, and wonderful speculations in his head.'

We have repeatedly stated, that the intellect of Luther did not particularly fit him for the investigation of abstract or speculative truth; but in all matters of a practical nature—in all that concerned the management of affairs, or the conduct of life, his judgment was both penetrating and profound. Hence, while nothing can be more flimsy than his metaphysics, nothing can be more generally sound than his practical judgments. Incapable of stating truth with philosophical precision, or laying it down with all its requisite limitations, he was a great master of that rough moral computation, which contents itself for practical purposes with approximate accuracy. This was especially the case in relation to that class of truths, in which a magnanimous mind, and lofty moral instincts, anticipate the lagging deductions of reason, and which are better understood and enforced by the heart than by the head. His writings abound in weighty and solid maxims, in which both the data and the demonstration are alike suppressed.

To great sagacity, Luther also added, in a pre-eminent degree, that passionate earnestness of character which leads men not only to hold truth tenaciously, but to take every means in their power to diffuse, propagate, and realise it; to make it victorious. In Luther, no doubt, the principal spring of this impulse was depth of religious conviction; but the tendency itself is as much an element of character in

some men, as the love of contemplation is in others. It is a form of ambition—a noble one, it is true—the ambition of intellectual dominion; and has actuated many a philosopher who flattered himself that he was single-eyed in his pursuit of wisdom. This warlike and polemic spirit is, no doubt, often most inconsistent with a calm and cautious survey of all the relations and details of great questions. But it is well for the world that there are some who, with speculative powers at least robust enough to enable them to seize large fragments of the truth, are immediately impelled to communicate it. Partial truth diffused, is better than perfect truth suppressed—better than stark ignorance and error—better than that condition of things in which Luther found the world.

And if the vehemence, natural to such minds, sometimes precipitates the conclusions of reason, or substitutes prejudices for them, it is to be remembered that it will be long before the same earnestness and zeal, in contending for truth, will be manifested by those intellects which abstractedly are best qualified to investigate it. It would, doubtless, be very beautiful to see the tranquillity of the philosopher conjoined with the fire of the advocate—first, intellect without passion, and then intellect with it. But it is a condition denied to us. If there be great energy of character, the processes of reason will often be precipitated or disturbed; if there be the coolness and equanimity of temperament which these require, the same qualities will unhappily continue to operate when their work is completed. The philosopher will still be apt to vindicate his character, and look most provokingly philosophic as to whether his views are effectually urged on mankind or not. Even if he become a zealous writer on their behalf, it still requires something more to encounter suffering for them; and while almost every religion has had those who have dared all and endured all in its defence, the

annals of science scarcely present us with the name of a single authentic martyr. Philosophers have been illustrious benefactors of mankind; but it requires more energy of passion, and a sterner nature than generally falls to their lot, to ruffle it with the world — to encounter obloquy, persecution, and death in defence of truth. Even Galileo was but too ready to recant when menaced with martyrdom, and to set the sun, which he had so impiously stopped, on his great diurnal journey again. It is true that he is said to have relapsed into heresy the moment after he had recanted, and drolly whispered, 'But the earth does move though!' Yet while the profession of error was uttered aloud, the confession of truth was made *sotto voce*. As Pascal says of the reservations of the Jesuits, *C'est dire la vérité tout bas, et un mensonge tout haut.*

Nor can it be said that the class of philosophers have in general been disposed to risk more, where truth has been practical and better calculated to influence the affections. The ancient philosophers are a notorious example of the contrary. They saw and scorned the puerilities of the ancient systems of superstition, but without vigorously attempting to destroy them, or to substitute better notions in their place. It was sufficient for them to make the convenient distinction between the *exoteric* and the *esoteric*. They could join in the popular rites with gravity of face and laughter in their hearts, and worship their gods and sneer at them at the same time.

The vehemence of Luther's passions, and the energy of his will, formed most remarkable features of his character — as much so assuredly as any quality of his intellect — and enabled him, (in conjunction with that lofty confidence, that heroic faith, which seemed to take for literal truth the declaration, 'what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them,') to effect greater things than were probably ever effected by the same

qualities before. Not only the pliant Melancthon yielded to the superior decision and energy of his nature,—as much, at least, as to his judgment,—but princes and nobles often yielded to it; and as to the common people, his confident bearing and resolute will achieved more than half his victory over them. In many instances, he seems to have made his way solely by the influence of an all-conquering enthusiasm and an inflexible purpose. His faith realised its own visions, and almost literally proved itself to be capable 'of removing mountains.'

On comparatively trivial occasions, and when in the wrong (not seldom the case), this intensity of passion, and inflexibility of purpose, must have made him no very pleasant coadjutor. Even the amiable Melancthon murmured after his death at the severity of that yoke, which, while Luther lived, he bore with much-enduring meekness. We wish, for Melancthon's own manhood, he had either murmured earlier, or not murmured at all. But in a great crisis, and where the Reformer was in the right, the qualities of mind we are now considering exhibit him in aspects full of grandeur. His enthusiasm is heroic, his energy of will sublime. It is curious to contrast his almost childish obstinacy and rabid virulence, in relation to Zwingle and the Sacramentarians, with the dignity of his deportment, under the influence of similar inflexibility of character, before and at the Diet of Worms. It was with him as with many powerful minds—great occasions calmed him; the energy was commensurate to the objects which called it forth; the weight upon the machine was proportioned to its momentum; and slow and majestic movement took the place of a self-destroying and turbulent force.

There was one peculiarity about Luther, of which we know not whether it most illustrates the robustness of his intellect, or the energy of his will, but it renders his character absolutely unique. We mean the rapidity and comparative ease with which he

triumphed over the deepest prejudices of his age and education;—Roman Catholics would doubtless say, over his happiest *prepossessions*. But this matters not to our present observation, which respects the singular character of the transformation, not its nature; though Protestants have pretty well made up their minds, that in all the great principles he so vigorously extricated and so boldly avowed, he showed as well the rectitude as the force of his understanding;—in his advocacy, for example, of the supremacy of the Scriptures, and in his condemnation (under the guidance of that principle) of indulgences, of the monastic institute, of the celibacy of the clergy, of the mass, of the usurpations of the Pope. The spectacle is a noble one. The maxims and the institutes which he denounced with so much energy and confidence, had been consecrated by universal veneration, and were covered by the 'awful hoar of ages.' The prejudices which he vanquished had been instilled into his childhood, and they were retained till he reached manhood; they were the prejudices of all his contemporaries; they held dominion, not only over the most timid, but over the most powerful intellects; they had bound even 'kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron;' and almost every attempt, certainly all recent attempts to demolish them, had been crushed by a despotism which united the utmost degree of craft with the most ruthless employment of violence, and was the most compact and formidable the world ever saw. That he should have been able to denude himself of such prejudices—boldly to avow their renunciation—and give utterance to a series of novel and startling dogmas in opposition to them, is an example of independence and fearlessness of mind, which the world had never before witnessed.

Our wonder is still further increased, when we reflect that Luther himself was originally as passionate a devotee of the system he renounced, as he afterwards became of that for which he renounced it.

Nor could he have been otherwise. The very depth and sincerity of his character forbade that he should hold any thing lightly; and whether he was right or wrong, he was always in earnest. While he was a a papist, he was a blind one; like Paul, 'an Hebrew of the Hebrews; and, as touching the law, a Pharisee.' He was none of those half-infidel ecclesiastics who abounded at Rome, and were the natural offspring of the age; men who saw through the superstition which they yet sanctioned, and conducted, with edifying solemnity of visage, the venerable rites at which they were all the while internally chuckling. He himself tells us (1539),—'I may and will affirm with truth, that at the present time there is no papist so conscientiously and earnestly a papist as I once was!' He repeats this in various forms in his Letters.

The account of his youthful visit to Rome, as given by himself, confirms this statement. The profound veneration with which he approached the holy city; the passionate devotion with which he visited sacred places, and engaged in public rites; the shock and revulsion of feeling with which he discovered that others were not so much in earnest as himself — all show how sincerely he was then attached to the ancient system, and by what severe struggles his spirit must have shaken off its thraldom. The spectacle of this mental revolution is rendered still more imposing by the comparative rapidity with which it was effected. In 1516, Luther was still a zealous papist; in October 1517, he published his Theses against Indulgences, and in less than four years from that date, he had committed himself to a contest with Rome on all the great principles of the Reformation. How rapidly those principles disclosed themselves, as the controversy proceeded, is sufficiently clear from the examination of his correspondence. In a letter dated Dec. 2. 1518, when expecting banishment by Frederic, he says to Spalatin—'If I remain here, I shall be without freedom of speech and writing;

if I go, I will discharge my conscience, and pour out my life for Christ.' A week after he says—'I shall yet one day be a little freer against these Roman hydras.' Three months later, he writes to Lange—'Our friend Eck is meditating new contests against me, and will compel me to do what I have often thought of; that is, by the blessing of Christ, to inveigh more seriously against these monsters. For, hitherto, I have but been playing and trifling in this matter.' He repeats nearly the same words, a fortnight after, to Scheurl—'I have often said, that hitherto I have been trifling; but now more serious assaults are to be directed against the Roman pontiff and the arrogance of his ministers.' In March 1519, he made this memorable confession—'I am reading the pontifical decretals,' (for the Leipsic disputation,) 'and I know not whether the Pope is Antichrist himself, or only his apostle.' In February 1520, he writes—'I have scarcely a remaining doubt that the Pope is verily Antichrist . . . so well does he agree with him in his life, his acts, his words, and his decrees.' On the 10th of July, soon after the appearance of the bull of condemnation, he says to Spalatin—'For me the die is cast—*jacta est alea*—the papal wrath and papal favour are alike despised by me; I will never be reconciled to them, nor communicate with them more. Let them burn my writings. I, unless I am unable to get a little fire, (doubtless alluding to the interdict,) will condemn and publicly burn the whole pontifical code.'

Perhaps, next to his journey to Worms, the two most daring acts of his life were the burning the papal bull, and his marriage. Of the former, and of the tremendous defiance it implied, we have already spoken. But the latter step required almost equal courage. His prejudices in relation to his monastic vows, as is seen by his correspondence, troubled him as much as any he had to vanquish. Nor had he vanquished them fully till his return from the Wart-

burg. When he resolved to marry (a resolution taken suddenly enough), one of his prime motives, if we may believe himself, was to give the utmost practical efficiency to his convictions, and encourage his followers in a conflict with a most powerful, because most distressing, class of associations. *Supposing* this his motive, it was certainly not only one of the boldest, but one of the most politic, expedients he could have adopted. He assures us, after giving other reasons for the step, that one was, 'ut confirmem *facto* quæ docui, tam multos invenio pusillanimes in tantâ luce evangelii.'*

That this was his principal motive, we may well doubt; with passions so strong as his, it was not likely to be more than co-ordinate with others. But that it was a very real motive, we may safely conclude: he was now past the heyday of passion—was forty-two years old—had lived in the most blameless celibacy, and had at first predestined his Catharine for another. Never did the cloister close upon one who was better qualified to appreciate and reciprocate the felicities of domestic life. As a husband and a father, his character is full of tenderness and gentleness; nor is there any part of his correspondence more interesting than his letters to his 'Kate,' and their 'little Johnny;' or those in which he alludes to his fireside.

The clamours of his adversaries showed how bold was the step on which he had ventured. 'Nothing less than Antichrist,' they said, 'could be the fruit of the union of a monk and a nun.' The taunt well justified the caustic sarcasm of Erasmus—'That there must already have been *many* Antichrists if *that* was the sole condition of their appearance.'

Comparatively rapid as was Luther's conquest over his own prejudices, the revolution still required much time. It was in perfect analogy with similar revo-

* De Wette, vol. iii. p. 13.

lutions in other minds. It was only more extensive and less gradual. Gradual such a change must ever be, from the limited capacities of our nature, and its law of progressive development. It would be not less absurd to suppose, that when he first protested against Indulgences he foresaw the results of that contest, than it would be to suppose that Cromwell anticipated his protectorate at the time of the battle of Newbury; or that Napoleon had already predestined himself to more than half the thrones of Europe when he entered on his Italian campaigns. As with them, so with Luther in his more hallowed enterprise —the horizon continually widened as he climbed the hill. Nor was it, as the confessions of Luther abundantly prove, without severe struggles, and momentary vacillations of purpose, that he pursued his arduous way. This is especially seen in that wavering letter to the Pope, written at the suggestion of Miltitz, in which, in language which more than approached servility and adulation, he deprecated the anger of Leo, and declared that nothing was further from his purpose than to question the authority, or separate from the communion of Rome. We do not mean to affirm that Luther intended to deceive his enemies; such a course was foreign from his whole nature, and opposed to his ordinary conduct. Yet it is certain that, before this period, he had intimated his increasing doubts whether the Pope was not Antichrist, and his convictions that the war with Rome was but just commenced. We cannot defend the *servility* of the letter at all; and can only defend its *honesty*, on the supposition that it was written in one of those moments of vacillation to which we have adverted; with the wish, inspired by his recent conferences with the nuncio, that the controversy might be amicably set at rest, and with his mind almost exclusively bent on whatever promised such an issue.*

* Dr. Waddington has given an exceedingly fair and impartial statement on this subject.

Marvellously rapid as was the revolution in his mind compared with what might be expected, it was yet by repeated exorcisms, and terrible convulsions of spirit, that the legion of demons was expelled. The current did not flow all one way; it was the flux and reflux of a strong tide.

The very honesty of purpose and love of truth by which he was unquestionably actuated, prevented at all events any artificial obstacles to his progress. He did not attempt, as so many do, to reconcile inconsistencies and harmonise counter-declarations. He frankly acknowledged the fallibility of his nature—his early errors and imperfect views. To every taunt of having receded from any position, he boldly said, in effect—'I thought so once; I was wrong. I think so no more. I appeal from Luther in ignorance, to Luther well-informed.' This was the case in relation to the memorable letter to which we have just referred—'I am truly grieved,' says he, 'that I *did* make such serious submissions; but, in truth, I then held respecting popes and councils just what is vulgarly taught us . . . But as I grew in knowledge, I grew in courage; and in truth they were at infinite pains to undeceive me, by an egregious display of their ignorance and flagitiousness.'

One of the most striking facts in the correspondence of Luther, is the indication it affords of very early discontent with the prevailing system of theology, and the actual condition of the church. It is evident that he was predestined to be a great reformer; that the germ of the Reformation existed in his bosom long before the dispute with Tetzel; and that, if the dispute respecting Indulgences had not led to its development, something else would. Even before Tetzel's 'drum' was heard in the neighbourhood of Wittemberg, he speaks with absolute loathing of the scholastic subtleties; expresses his conviction of the necessity of returning to a scriptural theology; loudly contends for that doctrine of justification by

faith which he afterwards made the lever of the Reformation; and expresses an abhorrence of Aristotle, which might more justly have been transferred to those dreaming commentators who had absurdly exalted a heathen philosopher into an oracle of the Christian church. Most of these passages will be found in the two Histories so often mentioned.

It has often been matter of surprise that the great contest of the Reformation should have turned upon so comparatively trivial a controversy as that which respected the Indulgences—a point which was soon after absolutely forgotten. But it is not the first time that a skirmish of outposts has led to a general engagement. It may be added, that insignificant as that one point may at first sight appear, it was most natural that the contest should begin there. And though the tide of battle rolled away from it, partly because even the hardihood of Rome could scarcely dare to defend such a post, and partly because the Reformers ceased to think of it in those more comprehensive corruptions which formed the object of their general assault (in which, indeed, this particular abuse, with many others like it, originated), it was not only the most natural point at which the conflict should begin, but it was most improbable that it should *not* begin there. Habituated as men's minds were to the corruptions of the Church, steeped in superstition from their very childhood, it could only be by some revolting paradox that they could be roused to think, examine, and remonstrate. The whole enormous expansion of the papal power had been but one long experiment on the patience and credulity of mankind. Each successive imposition was, it is true, worse than that which had preceded it; but when once it had fastened itself upon men's minds, and they had grown familiar with it, there was no further chance of awakening them from their apathy. Something further was needed, and a still more prodigious corruption must minister the hope

of reformation. Now Indulgences, as proclaimed in the gross system of Tetzel, and of other spiritual quacks like him, was at once the ultimate and consistent limit of that huckstering in 'merits,' to which almost all the other corruptions of the Church had been more plausibly subservient; and formed just that startling exaggeration of familiar abuses which was necessary to awaken men's minds to reconsideration. The notion of selling pardons for sins, wholesale and retail—of collecting into one great treasury the superfluous merits of the saints, and of doling them out by the pennyweight at prices fixed in the compound ratio of the necessities and means of the purchaser,—was a notion which, however monstrous, however calculated to awaken the drowsy consciences of mankind, was in harmony with the specious nonsense of works of supererogation, and the doctrine of penance. It was simply the substitution of the more valuable medium of solid coin for mechanical rites of devotion, tiresome pilgrimages, and acts of austerity; of golden chalices or silver candlesticks for scourges and horse-hair shirts; and, provided it implied the same amount of self-denial, what did it matter? The former plan was undeniably more profitable to Holy Church, and as to the penitent, few in our day but will admit that either plan was likely to be equally efficacious. The substitution of the merits of great saints for the transgressions of great sinners, or the remission of the pains of purgatory, might, for aught we can see, be as reasonably effected by pounds, shillings, and pence, as by walking twenty miles with pebbles in one's shoes.

The system of Indulgences, therefore—in the grosser form in which such men as Tetzel proclaimed it—was but the dark aphelion of the eccentric orbit in which the church of Christ had wandered; and from that point it naturally began to retrace its path to 'the fountain itself of heavenly radiance.'

It may be said, perhaps, that the system of Indul-

gences had been proclaimed under one modification or another for more than a century and a half before Tetzel appeared, without producing any remarkable reaction. We answer, first, that they had seldom or never been proclaimed in so disgusting and offensive a form, or with such consummate impudence, as by Tetzel; and secondly, that the reception given even to the more cautious and limited exhibitions of the system, proves the truth of what we have been asserting; for it was always on this, as the most obvious and revolting corruption, that the earlier reformers and satirists of the Church most bitterly fastened. The moral instincts of such men, indeed, were not so vitiated as to render them insensible to the vices and profligacies of the ecclesiastical system generally; but the idea of bartering the justice and mercy of God himself for gold, naturally seemed the quintessence of every other corruption. What could rouse mankind, if the spectacle of the ghostly pedlar openly trafficking in his parchment wares of pardon for the past, and indulgence for the future—haggling over the price of an insult to God or a wrong to man—letting out crime to hire, and selling the glories of heaven as a cheap pennyworth—did not fill them with abhorrence and indignation? The contempt with which Chaucer's Pilgrims listen to the impudent offer of the Pardoner, well shows the feelings which such outrages on all common sense and every moral instinct, could not fail to excite.

So gross was this abuse, that even the most bigoted papists—Eck, for example—were compelled to denounce it; nor were there any more caustic satirists of it than some of themselves. Witness the witty comedy of Thomas Heywood, who, though a Catholic, hated the mendicant friars as heartily as any of his Protestant contemporaries. But no satire, however extravagant, could be a caricature of the follies and knavery of this class of men. One of the wittiest sarcasms of the play is but a translation of Tetzel's

impudent assertion, that 'no sooner, did the money chink in the box, than the souls for which it was offered flew up into heaven.'

> 'With small cost and without any pain,
> These pardons bring them to heaven plain;
> Give me but a penny or two-pence.
> And, as soon as the soul departeth hence,
> In half-an-hour, or three-quarters *at most*,
> The soul is in heaven with the Holy Ghost.'

And we doubt not that that most humorous chapter in the ancient and popular satire of Howleglass, in which that worthy enacts the part of a Franciscan friar, is little more than a literal version of the tricks of a class of men, of whom, knave as he was, he was but an insufficient representative.*

But though it was natural that the struggle of the Reformation should commence with Indulgences, it was impossible that it should end there. Luther soon quitted the narrow ground, and the mean antagonist, of his first conflicts; and asserted against that whole system of spiritual barter and merit-mongering, of which Tetzel's doctrine was but an extreme type, his counter principle of the perfect gratuitousness of salvation—of 'justification by faith alone.' On his mode of exhibiting this great doctrine, we shall now offer a very few remarks.

With that pregnant brevity with which he knew so well how to express himself, he showed his sense of the importance of this doctrine, and its commanding position in the evangelical system, by describing it as *Articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*. He might more truly have called it so, if he had always duly guarded the statement of it; if, while repudiating the doctrine, under whatsoever modification, that the tribunal of heaven can be challenged or its rewards achieved in virtue of deeds, of which every good man is himself the *first* to acknowledge the manifold imperfec-

* The same story is also found, with certain variations, in 'Friar Gerund,' and other fictions of the like class.

tions—much less by fantastical devices of human invention, destitute of all moral qualities—he had uniformly connected his doctrine in *expression*, as he did in *fact*, with its just practical consequences. This, however, he did not do; and we are constrained to lament, with Mr. Hallam, the very frequent occurrence of exaggerated expressions, to which the critic gives the name of *Antinomian paradoxes*. We do not think, however, that even here Mr. Hallam has quite done the Reformer justice. He candidly admits indeed that Luther 'could not mean to give any encouragement to a licentious disregard of moral virtue;' 'though,' he adds, 'in the technical language of his theology, he might deny its proper obligation.'* More truly, in our judgment, has Jortin, whose doctrinal moderation is well known, represented the matter in his Life of Erasmus. 'Luther's favourite doctrine was justification by faith alone; but we must do him the justice to observe that he perpetually inculcated the necessity of good works. According to him, a man is justified only by faith; but he cannot be justified without works; and where those works are not found, there is assuredly no true faith:' And Melancthon, in a passage cited by Mr. Hallam himself, declares, 'De his omnibus,' (after enumerating with other doctrines the necessity of good works,) 'scio re ipsâ Lutherum sentire eadem, sed inerudíti quædam ejus φορτικωτερα dicta, cum non videant quo pertineant, nimium amant.' Dr. Waddington truly remarks that not even the strongest passages in Luther's treatise, 'De Libertate Christianâ,' prove that the author would deny the necessity of good works *except* as a means of justification; as a ground, in fact, of saying to the Divine Being, 'You *must* reward me—for I am entitled to it.' In proof of this, Dr. Waddington cites the passage 'Non liberi sumus per fidem Christi ab operibus, sed *ab opinionibus operum*,

* Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol. i. p. 416.

i. e. a stultâ præsumptione justificationis per opera quæsitæ. Fides enim conscientias nostras redimit, rectificat, et servat, qua cognoscimus justitiam esse non in operibus, *licet opera abesse neque possint neque debeant.*'

Every thing obviously depends on the *sense* in which Luther 'would deny the necessity of good works.' While he would have denied, that any man can challenge 'the free gift' of salvation (Scripture itself calls it by that name) as the 'wages' of good works, he would as strenuously have affirmed that good works form the only real evidence and the necessary result of the possession of that 'faith which justifies.' As to the influence of the system he advocated and that he opposed, on practical morality, he would have said that the principal difference was, not that the former dispensed with morality any more than the latter, but that it appealed mainly to totally different principles of our nature for its production; to the cheerful impulses of gratitude and hope, rather than to the 'spirit of bondage' and the depressing influence of fear. And both philosophy and fact may convince us that they are certainly not the least powerful impulses of the two.

But whatever Luther's early paradoxes on this subject—of which we are by no means the apologists, and regret that there should have been so much cause for censure—his later writings afford ample proof that he had corrected them. When Agricola had adopted and justified them in their unlimited form, and pushed them to their theoretic results, with a recklessness which perhaps first roused Luther to take alarm at their danger, the Reformer instantly assailed, refuted, and condemned him, and succeeded in compelling the rash theologian to retract. Several deeply interesting documents on this subject occur in the Correspondence*, which fully show that the

* Vol. v.

faith which Luther made the basis of his theology was that of which the only appropriate evidence is holiness, and which necessarily creates it.

Mr. Hallam admits that passages inconsistent with the extreme views he attributes to the Reformer may be adduced from his writings; but affirms, 'that in treating of an author so full of unlimited propositions, no positive proof as to his tenets can be refuted by the production of inconsistent passages.' But the question is, whether these inconsistent passages ought not to modify those which establish the supposed 'positive proof?' If we are to pause at the unqualified reception of the one class of propositions, we may well pause also before the like reception of the other. If two statements, in a writer 'much given to unlimited propositions,' appear inconsistent, we should endeavour to make the one limit the other; and even if they are absolutely irreconcileable, we are hardly justified in taking either as the exclusive exponent of the writer's views, or without the adjustments resulting from a collation of passages. There are propositions of Scripture itself which may be, and which *have been*, as much wrested to the support of 'Antinomian paradoxes,' as almost any declarations of Luther could be.

Such a candid construction of Luther's real views, seems to us the more necessary, precisely because, as Mr. Hallam justly says, he *is* so 'full of unlimited propositions.' It is ever the characteristic of oratorical genius to express the truths it feels with an energy which borders on paradox. Anxious to penetrate and exclusively occupy the minds of others with their own views and sentiments, such as eminently possess this species of genius are seldom solicitous to state propositions with the due limitations. It may be further remarked, that Luther's abhorrence of prevailing errors naturally increased this tendency; action and reaction, as usual, were equal; the liberated pendulum passed, as was to be expected, beyond

the centre of its arc of oscillation. This we believe to be one principal cause of the many really objectionable statements of Luther on this subject.

Our veneration for the great Reformer, and the influence which even the errors of such a writer as Mr. Hallam are apt to exercise, must be our apology for the freedom of the preceding strictures. The work containing the observations upon which we have felt ourselves constrained thus to remark, is one for which all intelligent inquirers must always be largely indebted to its author, both for instruction and rational delight.

On the whole, few names have such claims on the gratitude of mankind as that of Luther. Even Rome owes him thanks; for whatever ameliorations have taken place in her system, have been owing far more to him than to herself. If there are any two facts which history establishes, it is the desperate condition of the Church at the time Luther appeared, and the vanity of all hopes of a self-sought and voluntary reformation. On the former we need not dwell — for none now deny it; it appears, not only on every page of contemporary history, but in all the forms — especially the more popular — of mediæval literature. Never was a remark more just than that of Mr. Hallam, that a great part of the literature of the middle ages may be considered as artillery levelled against the clergy.

Of the second great fact — the hopelessness of any effective internal reform — history leaves us in as little doubt. The heart itself was the chief seat of disease; and reformation must have commenced where corruption was most inveterate. Nor, until certain long-forgotten principles should be reclaimed, and the Bible and its truths restored — a result necessarily fatal to a system which was founded on their perversion, and which was safe only in their suppression — could any reformation be either radical or permanent. It would

be as nugatory as that which was sometimes directed against subordinate parts of the system — Monachism, for instance. Again and again did reformation strive to purify that institute, and as often, after running through the same cycle of precisely similar changes, did it fall into the same corruptions. Each new order commenced with the profession, often with the reality, of voluntary poverty and superior austerity, and ended, as reputed sanctity brought wealth and power, in all the concatenated vices of the system. The reason is obvious; its *principles* were vicious, and hence the rapidity and uniformity of the decline — one of the most remarkable and instructive phenomena of ecclesiastical history. 'That which is crooked cannot be made straight;' and if man will attempt even a style of supposed virtue for which God never constituted him, he will meet with the same recompence as attends every other violation of the divine laws.

For similar reasons, nothing but the recovery of principles fatal to the Papal System could be expected to effect the Reformation; and about these the champions of that system could not be expected to busy themselves. An usurper will hardly abdicate his own throne — however wrongfully gained.

Any reform which had merely touched externals, and left the essence of the system the same, would have been useless; the Church would soon have fallen back, like the purified forms of monasticism, into its ancient corruptions. Nor was it amongst the least proofs of the sagacity of Luther, that he so early perceived, and so systematically contended, that a reformation of doctrine — the restoration of evangelic truth — was essential to every other reform. But in fact, even the most moderate reforms, owing to the corruption of Rome itself, and its interest in their maintenance, were all but hopeless. Often did the Papal Court admit its own delinquencies, and as often evade their correction. The papal concessions on this

point, were a perpetual source of triumph to Luther and the Reformers. Even when a pope really sought some amendments, he found it impossible to resist the influences around him. Adrian, the successor of the refined and luxurious Leo, gave infinite disgust by the severity of his manners, and his sincere desire to see some sort of reformation; his long catalogue of abuses which he wished to be corrected, delivered in at the Diet of Nuremburg, (and inconsistently accompanied with loud calls for the violent suppression of the Reformation,) was never forgiven by his own adherents. 'The Church,' said he, 'stands in need of a reformation, but we must take one step at a time.' Luther sarcastically remarked —'The Pope advises that a few centuries should be permitted to intervene between the first and second step.'

Hence we may see the comparative futility of the small time-serving expedients of Erasmus. His satire, bitter as it was, was not directed against the heart of the system—he waged war only with the Friars. Not that we undervalue his labours: as a pioneer he was invaluable. Nor, if we except Luther, Melancthon, and Zwingle, do we know any man who really effected so much for the cause of the Reformation. The labours of Luther and himself terminated in one result; the streams, however different, flowed at last in one channel—

'Ubi Rhodanus ingens *amne prærapido* fluit,
Ararque *dubitans* quo suos fluctus agat.'

Such are our deliberate views of the character, labours, and triumphs of Luther. We have been the more copious in our account of them, that we may do what in us lies to honour his memory, at a period when there is a large party of degenerate Protestants, who, not content with denying the unspeakable benefits which he conferred upon mankind,

have not hesitated to speak of him with contempt and contumely, and in some cases even to question the honesty of his motives and the sincerity of his religion!*

* 'Some of the Oxford men,' says Dr. Arnold, 'now commonly revile Luther as a bold, bad man; how surely they would have reviled Paul.'—*Life and Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 250.

LIFE AND GENIUS OF LEIBNITZ.*

SAGES and poets have vied with each other in the invention of significant symbols by which to express the littleness of all earthly greatness, and the vanity of all human ambition; not always superior themselves to a secret ambition of obtaining fame even by showing it to be nothing — of being remembered for the beauty and the excellence wherewith they have typified vanity. Like the sculptor employed to ornament the tomb, they have hoped to be celebrated for their eloquent images of death, their graceful emblems of mortality. Yet no device feigned by art, no object presented to us by the ravages of time — the broken column, the sarcophagus empty even of dust, the stone inscribed with a silent history, or with but half legible characters, can furnish any memento of the above truths more expressive, or more touching, than that which presents itself in the tarnished decorations of a series of portly folios or quartos of a past age, the product of some capacious and restless intellect, which toiled, as was fondly thought and hoped, for immortality; which aspired, not merely to be remembered in Biographical Dictionaries — those crowded cemeteries of mind — but to hold active and familiar converse with the men of successive generations, — to live in perpetual citation on the lips of grateful and admiring readers. These misjudging aspirants for fame are often consigned to the 'dust

* 'Edinburgh Review,' July, 1846.

Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von Leibnitz: eine Biographie. Von Dr. G. E. GUHRAUER. Zwei Bände. (Life of G. M. Leibnitz, 2 vols.) 12mo. Breslau: 1842.

and darkness of the upper shelf;' rarely opened except by some chance visitor, out of idle curiosity,—not from any wish to hold communion with their spirits, or to emancipate even for an instant their imprisoned wit and wisdom. These remains are guarded, it is true, with jealous care, and kept safe behind handsome doors and gratings; but the page is as mute as the voice of him who wrote it; and that supplementary body of ink and paper by which the fond author hoped to perpetuate his existence, and secure a second and longer life on earth, is dead as the first tenement of flesh and blood, and without a hope of resurrection. To traverse an old library filled with such remains, is like walking through the catacombs of a great city. Could the thought of the utter want of sympathy, the 'cold oblivion' which awaited them, have obtruded itself on the glowing fancy of those who wrought for immortality, it had been enough to paralyse all their energies, and make the pen drop from their nerveless hand.

We have been led into these gloomy reflections by the lot of that illustrious man, on whose life and genius we are about to offer a few remarks. His name is no obscure one; on the contrary, he has achieved, if ever man did, a high European reputation, and his memory is laid up with that of the great of all time; and yet we believe there are few, even of the utterly obscure, who, having written so much, are read so little. It is the smallest possible fraction of his works that even those who have troubled themselves to peruse any part of them, are acquainted with; while the immense majority, who yet know him renowned for mathematical discoveries and metaphysical theories, have never read a syllable of him.

For this comparative neglect there are more reasons than one. To a certain extent he shares but the lot of all great philosophers. Their condition, in this respect, is far less enviable than that of great poets. The former can never possess so large a circle of

readers under any circumstances; but that number is still further abridged by the fact, that even the truths they have taught or discovered, form but stepping-stones in the progress of science, and are afterwards digested, systematised, and better expounded in other works composed by inferior men. The creations of poetry on the contrary, remain ever beautiful as long as the language in which they are embodied shall endure: even to translate is to injure them. Thus it is, that for one reader of Archimedes (even amongst those who know just what Archimedes achieved), there are thousands of readers of Homer; and of Newton it may be truly said, that nine-tenths of those who are familiar with his doctrines have never studied him except at second-hand. Far more intimate, no doubt, is that sympathy which Shakspeare and Milton inspire; 'being dead, they yet speak;' and may even be said to form a part of the very minds of their readers.

But this is not the only cause of the almost total neglect of the works of Leibnitz. As he wrote often with great beauty, and on a great variety of subjects, there should be no reason, one might imagine, why he should be less read than many other philosophers whose claims to be remembered are far inferior to his. The cause, we are inclined to think, is owing, in part, to the fragmentary character of his productions: though enormously voluminous, there is almost nothing except his 'Theodicée' and his 'Remarks on Locke' that can be considered systematic; and he has nowhere, not even in these pieces, given a complete digest of his philosophical system. The mass of his works consists of occasional papers;—such as his contributions to the 'Acta Eruditorum' of Leipzic, and the immense remains of that Literary Correspondence in which he was actively engaged throughout his life, and which included the name of almost every eminent scholar and thinker of the age. In these Letters he continually repeats (as was most

natural) fragments of his opinions; so that the reader finds that he has got most of what Leibnitz thought, long before he has read all that Leibnitz wrote, and might here, if any where, take a brick as a specimen of the house.

There is yet another cause of this comparative neglect. With all his intellectual power, he committed one fatal error. None have ventured to expound metaphysical theories which depend more absolutely on mere conjecture, or which are less adapted to invite disciples. His *Monads* are unintelligible even to his most devoted commentators; his *Pre-established Harmony* has long since been dissolved; and a score of other theories, and rudiments of theories, which were suggested to his ever active genius, lie scattered in gigantic ruins over the vast field of his labours.

Nor is this all. A very large portion of his writings, as already said, consists of his Letters. Now, not only is the Latin in which he often writes far from being Ciceronian; not only are the theories he defends exploded, or the truths he develops rendered elementary in the subsequent progress of science; but the books cited have been long forgotten, the very names of the authors are never heard of: even the *doctissimus Hackmannus* and the *illustrissimus Kettwigius* have somehow become obscure. The allusions are unintelligible, the incidents without interest, the pleasantry insipid.

These causes are at least sufficient to show why we ought not to wonder that Leibnitz for more than a century has been but little read.

But it is well that those illustrious men, whose voluminous writings, for the reasons above assigned, will never be equally remembered with those of the great poet, should have their periodical commemoration; when the achievements by which they benefited their own generation and all time may be honourably recounted, their portraits brought out of the dust and

dampness where they were fading away, and the lineaments retouched and vivified; when some of their most pregnant thoughts and weighty maxims may be repeated in the ear of mankind; and some fragments of their wisdom rescued from the sepulchre of their 'opera omnia.' Even this is better than sheer oblivion. They have influenced the mind of the species some generations back, and through that *indirectly* for ever. It is something more to be permitted to do this *directly*, in modes however limited, and for intervals however transient. Yielding to the instinct of immortality, each grateful shade, thus honoured, will triumphantly exclaim, 'Non omnis moriar!'

Such a festival in honour of Leibnitz seems to be now in course of celebration in Germany. 'Old Mortality' is there going his round, and reviving the imagery and inscriptions on the philosopher's tomb; and we could hardly hope to find a more favourable juncture for offering our homage than the present, when his works have just been republished at Berlin, and a new biography composed by Dr. Guhrauer.

We shall commence with a sketch of his life, the rather that it is more varied than that of the generality of literary men; so much so, indeed, as to increase in no small degree that wonder which his prodigious attainments are calculated to excite. It is difficult to reconcile so much activity and locomotion with such severe study. He must have learnt that useful lesson of losing no time 'in changing his hand,' as Adam Smith expresses it; and of bringing his faculties to bear with resolute promptitude on whatever, for the moment, exacted attention.

The principal sources of the biography of Leibnitz are the materials left by his friend Eckhart—his Life by Brucker, in the 'History of Philosophy'—his well-known 'Eloge' by Fontenelle—that by Bailly, first published in 1768, and republished in his 'Discours' in 1790—that by Kœstner, published in 1769—the 'Memoir' prefixed to several editions of the

'Theodicée,' by M. Jaucourt, originally published under the feigned name of M. Neufville, — a piece possessing considerable merit, and praised by no less an authority than Lessing, — and the recent work of Dr. Guhrauer. This last author has diligently availed himself of every source of information; and has not only corrected some previous errors, but has brought to light some facts hitherto unknown. Many fragments also of the philosopher's writings, which had remained buried in obscurity, enrich Erdmann's recent edition of them. It would seem, indeed, as if these writings were a mine which could not be exhausted: consisting for the most part of Miscellaneous Papers and Correspondence, they were widely scattered, and were recovered only at intervals. In 1765, appeared a quarto volume of his posthumous works, under the editorship of Raspe. The principal of these was the commentary on Locke's great work, and is entitled 'Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain.' This volume is of rare occurrence. The edition of Leibnitz's works by Dutens, in six large quartos, published in 1768, was in vain styled *Opera Omnia.* It not only does not contain the pieces published by Raspe, for which Dutens, in his general preface, offers no very sufficient reason; but in 1805, appeared in octavo another volume of unpublished Letters, under the editorship of I. G. H. Feder.

Dr. Guhrauer's work has considerable merit; but it might have been judiciously comprised in one volume, by omitting not a few digressions on collateral subjects, in which the author has indulged *more Germano.* We shall also have occasion to point out some examples of prejudiced statement, into which the customary idolatries of a biographer have betrayed him.

One of the most curious things contained in this work is a fragment of *Autobiography.* Fragment as it is, it gives a striking account of the author's childhood and youth, throws a flood of light on his intellectual history, and exhibits all the prominent

features of his character—even to its foibles—with a vivacity as amusing as can be found in any composition of a similar kind. As this fragment has never appeared in English, we shall take occasion to gratify the reader by a free translation of two or three paragraphs. Most of the facts are repeated, again and again, in different portions of Leibnitz's miscellaneous writings, but perhaps nowhere else so connectedly or so fully.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz was born at Leipsic, on the 21st of June, 1646. He may be said to have been a foster-child of literature. His father, Frederic Leibnitz, was professor of ethics in the university of Leipsic; his mother was the daughter of William Schmuck, another professor in the same university; and his mother's sister was married to John Strauch, professor in Jena, a celebrated jurist.

The father of Leibnitz was married thrice. He had one son by his first marriage, and one (the subject of this sketch) by the second. He died September 5. 1652, when the future philosopher was only six years old. He left a moderate fortune, and a valuable library, which last the young Leibnitz soon began to consider the best part of his inheritance. It is with his introduction to these treasures that we commence our brief extracts from the *Autobiography*.

He was sent early to the Nicolai school at Leipzic; but his real education seems to have been carried on by himself, and is described in a whimsical manner in the following paragraph:—

'As I grew in years and strength I was wonderfully delighted with the reading of history, and having obtained some books of that kind in German, I did not lay them aside till I had read them all through. Latin I studied at school; and no doubt should have proceeded at the usual slow rate, had not accident opened to me a method peculiar to myself. In the house where I lodged, I chanced to stumble on two books which a certain student had left in pledge.

One, I remember, was Livy, the other the Chronological Thesaurus of Calvisius. Having got possession of these, I immediately devoured them. Calvisius, indeed, I understood easily, because I had in German a book of universal history which often told me the same things; but in Livy I stuck longer; for as I was ignorant of ancient history, and the diction in such works is more elevated than common, I scarcely in truth understood a single line. But as the edition was an old one, embellished with woodcuts, over these I pored diligently, and read the words immediately beneath them,—never stopping at the obscure places, and skipping what I imperfectly understood. When I had repeated this operation several times, and tumbled the book over and over—attacking it each time after a little interval—I understood much more; with all which, wonderfully delighted, I proceeded without any dictionary till almost the whole was quite plain.'

These self-acquired accomplishments having disclosed themselves at school, Leibnitz tells us that his master was much shocked that his pupil should be making such unauthorised progress in learning.

'My master, dissembling the matter, repairs to those who had the care of my education, and admonishes them that they should take care lest I should interrupt my studies by a premature and preposterous kind of reading; that Livy was just as fit for me as a "buskin for a pigmy;" that books proper for another age should be kept out of the hands of a boy, and that I must be sent back to Comenius or the lesser catechism. And without doubt he had succeeded, if there had not been present at the interview a certain erudite and well-travelled knight, a friend of the master of the house. He, displeased with the envy or stupidity of the master, who, he saw, wished to measure every stature by his own, began to show, on the contrary, that it was unjust and intolerable that a budding genius should be repressed by harshness

and ignorance; that a boy who gave no vulgar promise was rather to be encouraged, and furnished with every kind of help. He then desired me to come to him; and when he saw that I gave no contemptible answers to the questions he put, he did not rest till he had extorted from my relatives permission to enter my father's library. At this I triumphed as if I had found a treasure. I longed to see the ancients, most of whom were known to me only by name — Cicero, Quinctilian, and Seneca, Pliny, Herodotus, Xenophon, Plato, and many a Latin and Greek father. These I revelled in as the fit took me, and was delighted with the wonderful variety of matter before me; so that, before I was yet twelve years old, I understood the Latin writers tolerably well, began to lisp Greek, and wrote verses with singular success. . . . . Indeed, in polite letters and in poetry, I made such progress that my friends feared, lest beguiled by the sweetness of the flattering muses, I should acquire disgust for studies more serious and rugged. But the event soon relieved them from this anxiety. For no sooner was I summoned to the study of logic, than I betook myself with great delight to the thorny intricacies which others abhorred. And not only did I easily apply the rules to examples, which, to the admiration of my preceptors, I alone did, but expressed my doubts on certain points; and already meditated some novel views, which, lest they should escape me, I committed to paper. Long after, I read some things which I had written at the age of fourteen, and was wonderfully delighted with them.'

As to his *doubts*, he tells us that none of his masters satisfied him, but only admonished him that 'it did not become a boy to busy himself with novelties, in things which he had not sufficiently studied.' Meantime his friends were possessed by a new fear.

'Those who had the care of my education, — to whom my greatest obligation is, that they interfered as little as possible with my studies, — as they had

before feared lest I should become a poet, so they now dreaded lest I should stick fast in scholastic subtleties; *but they did not know how little my mind could be filled with one class of subjects;* for no sooner did I understand that I was destined for the study of the law, than, dismissing every thing else, I applied myself to that. . . . . And in this way I reached my seventeenth year, happy in nothing more than this, that my studies were not directed according to the judgment of others, but by my own humour; for which reason it was that I was always esteemed chief among those of my own age in all college exercises, not by the testimony of tutors only, but by that of my fellow disciples.'

He graduated as bachelor of philosophy in 1663, at the early age of seventeen, and proceeded to his master's degree in the same faculty in the following year. On both these occasions, and on others of a like nature, he manifested the precocity of his metaphysical talents by the subjects selected for the customary disputations. — After giving an account of the circumstances which prevented his offering himself for his doctor's degree at Leipsic, and sent him to the university at Altdorf, Leibnitz proceeds: —

'There,' says he, 'I took my doctor's degree, in my twenty-second year, *maximo omnium applausu;* for when I maintained my public thesis, I discoursed with so much facility, and explained myself with so much clearness, that not the auditors only wondered at this new and unusual ἀκρίβεια, specially in a lawyer, but even those who had engaged to respond, publicly acknowledged that I had excellently well satisfied them.'

Refusing an offer of a professorship at Altdorf, Leibnitz repaired to Nuremburg. While there, he happened to hear of a Society of Alchemists, who were prosecuting, with the usual success, the search after the 'philosopher's stone.' He was seized with a strong desire to become acquainted with these adepts; but, as he was absolutely ignorant of all their terms

of art, he knew not how to negotiate an introduction. Happily he recollected that their ignorance must be quite equal to his own; and so, boldly extracting from the writings of the most celebrated alchemists, all the most obscure terms he could find, he composed a letter, of which he did not understand a syllable; and from that moment became, if one may indulge in the paradox, as knowing as themselves. What was dark to himself was happily quite clear to these illuminati, who, following their usual instinct for nonsense, or afraid to be supposed ignorant, professed to augur favourably of one who could write so profoundly. They invited him to assist at their conferences, introduced him to their laboratory, and made him their secretary.

While at Nuremburg, he met with a valuable friend and patron in the Baron de Boineburg, chancellor to the Elector of Mentz. Chance (some say) brought them together at the hotel where Leibnitz was lodging. The baron, who, amidst his official duties, had never ceased to cultivate science and literature, was struck with the talents and attainments of his young acquaintance. He gave him his counsel,—advised him to attach himself to Jurisprudence and History, as the studies which would furnish him with the best means of advancing himself in life, and exhorted him to repair to Frankfort-on-the-Maine for the further prosecution of those studies: meantime, he promised to endeavour to procure for him some office worthy of his talents in the court of the elector. With this advice Leibnitz complied, and at Frankfort abandoned himself entirely to the studies thus recommended. It was there, amidst many distractions, that he composed, in 1667, his little treatise entitled, 'A New Method of Learning and Teaching Jurisprudence.'* This early work displays all his principal characteristics—his vast reading, the acuteness, originality,

* Nova Methodus discendæ docendæque Jurisprudentiæ.

and comprehensiveness of his mind, as well as his propensity to form projects too vast for fulfilment, and to make promises which sound something like presumption. This little treatise was in the press when the Baron de Boineburg summoned him to the service of the Elector of Mentz; and the young author, with the new-developed instinct of a courtier, dedicated his work to his patron. In 1668, he followed up his 'Nova Methodus,' by his 'Ratio Corporis Juris reconcinnandi,' — a 'beautiful project,' as M. Jaucourt calls it — 'un beau projet' — nothing less in fact than a new digest of Universal Law!

But the author we have just cited might well ask, 'can we believe that Leibnitz (then little more than twenty-two years of age) had sufficient light for a reform of this gigantic kind?' *A faire un bon livre*, as M. Jaucourt says, is all that could be expected of the splendid talents of any young philosopher — even though a Leibnitz — engaged on such a subject.

In the same year, he also published his treatise 'De Arte Combinatoriâ,' in which, though he advances many things which he afterwards saw cause to reject, he displays much of the analytical skill, and originality of conception, which afterwards made him so famous in the field of pure mathematics. The abdication of John Casimir, king of Poland, in 1668, when the elective throne was besieged by a crowd of aspirants, afforded Leibnitz his first opportunity of signalising his talents in political discussion. Amongst the claimants was the Prince of Neuburg, and Boineburg engaged Leibnitz to support his pretensions. In this, as in one or two other cases, our author was perhaps too easily led to assume the office of advocate, before exercising that of philosopher; to accept a thesis, and then examine how it could be supported. Once engaged, however, his philosophic habits of mind soon appear in this as in similar instances; and, rising above the transitory and limited subjects proposed, he expatiates on the condition of Poland, its prin-

ciples of government, and the qualities it should seek in the monarchs of its choice. Though this *brochure* did not attain its end, Leibnitz was not without his reward. At the instigation of Boineburg he was made a member of the council of the elector, a post which he held till 1672. Without neglecting its duties, his ever active mind found time to produce numberless pieces on the most diversified subjects, which secured him extensive reputation, but which it is beyond our limits even to enumerate. One of his greatest projects at this period, but, like many others, never executed, was to revise and remodel the 'Encyclopædia' of Alstedius, according to a new method, founded on the relations of the various sciences to each other. A curious publication, which appeared in 1670, was very characteristic of his literary habits. He had long been of opinion that Aristotle had been depreciated below his real merits, in the necessary recoil against the tyranny of the Scholastic Philosophy. Instead of treating this subject systematically, in the shape of a distinct dissertation, he contents himself with republishing a work *against* Aristotle, written by Mario Nizoli, a native of Modena, so early as 1553, to which our author adds a letter to Thomasius, a preface, and notes!

In 1672, Leibnitz went on a political mission to Paris. Here he spent a considerable time, and in very different employments from those of the generality of foreign visitors to that gay metropolis. He pursued his studies with his usual intensity, but particularly applied himself to Mathematics, in which he frankly represents himself as up to that time comparatively uninitiated. At Paris, in 1672, he became acquainted with Huygens; and the perusal of some of his writings, together with the study of those of Galileo and Descartes, and the mathematical fragments of Pascal, inspired him with a zeal in his new pursuit, which, combined with his great inventive talents, not only soon put him in possession of all that had been

hitherto discovered, but prompted him to make discoveries for himself.

On the all but exhausted controversy respecting the Differential Calculus, and of Leibnitz's claims to be considered an inventor, we have little to say in addition to what has been already often repeated; and that little has been suggested solely by the observations which Dr. Guhrauer has, in his recent biography, thought proper to make. Our remarks on his statements will be found farther on.

Whilst prosecuting his mathematical studies, Leibnitz noted certain imperfections in the Arithmetical Machine which Pascal had endeavoured to construct; and with his characteristic ambition of attempting all things difficult, he conceived the idea of improving and perfecting it. To this task he devoted considerable time, thought, and money; and he has left a brief account of his success in the third volume of his works.* But he was at length obliged to abandon it; and it thus forms one of the huge pile of projects which he has left incomplete, and which serve only to show the activity and universality of his genius.

In the year 1673, Baron de Boineburg died; and as official duties no longer confined Leibnitz to Paris, he took the opportunity of visiting England, and there became acquainted with Boyle, Oldenburgh, Gregory, Wallis, Newton, and others. Several of the literary and scientific acquaintances he here made, were added to the contributors to his already vast correspondence.

Shortly after his arrival in England, his patron, the Elector of Mentz, died (1674), and Leibnitz resolved to return to Germany, and to push his fortunes in some other direction. Previous to his leaving England, the Royal Society honoured him, and did themselves honour, by enrolling him amongst their members. He returned by way of Paris, whence he wrote a letter to John Frederic, duke of Brunswick-

* Dutens' edition, vol. iii. p. 413.

Lunenburg, to inform him of his situation; and that prince immediately offered him a place at his court, a pension, and, what was as much prized, the liberty of remaining in foreign countries as long as he pleased. Availing himself of this permission, Leibnitz remained at Paris five months, chiefly engaged in the prosecution of his mathematical studies. He then returned for a brief interval to England, thence paid a visit to Holland, and took his place at the court of his sovereign at Hanover, in 1676; and with this prince and his successors he spent the remainder of his life.

The tastes of the duke so happily coincided with those of Leibnitz, that he must have been here perfectly in his element. He commenced his duties with the agreeable task of enriching the ducal library with important works and manuscripts. His patron often joined him in his physical and chemical studies; and thus occupied, Leibnitz doubtless found it less tedious to play the courtier, than a philosopher in general would be apt to find it.

The prince died in 1679, but Leibnitz lost nothing by his death; as his successor, Prince Ernest Augustus, then bishop of Osnaburg, cherished towards him the same sentiments, and retained him in the same employments. He engaged him, however, in one new task, which, had it not been for the eccentric manner in which Leibnitz most characteristically performed it, would have involved a mere waste of time, and, as it was, must have grievously interrupted studies far more important and congenial. It was that of writing the History of the House of Brunswick. Here, as in all like cases, he broke away from the comparatively narrow limits assigned to him; and in the course of his very comprehensive researches, in which he amassed an enormous quantity of materials (some of them very remotely connected with his proposed subject), his active mind suggested many novel and sometimes brilliant speculations, in various branches of science; more especially in rela-

tion to geology (of which he may, in virtue of his 'Protogæa,' be called the founder), comparative philology, and the philosophy of history and antiquities. In quest of his ample collection of materials he travelled during the years 1687, 88, 89;—visiting Franconia, Bavaria, Suabia, Austria, and subsequently Italy.* Libraries, monasteries, convents, abbeys, tombs, public documents, manuscripts, rare books, were all laid under contribution. On his return in 1690, he reviewed the treasures thus acquired, and was surprised to find he was so rich. In collecting materials for the History of Brunswick, his huge drag had brought up all sorts of fragments of antiquity, many of them highly curious. From these accumulations, and from the treasures in Wolfenbüttel, recently committed to his care, he selected the materials of a great work, which he calls 'Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus.' It is in fact a collection of treaties, declarations, manifestos, contracts of royal marriages, and public documents of a similar nature. It extended to two folio volumes, the first of which appeared in 1693; the second volume, enriched by communications from Oxenstiern, not till 1700. To the first volume is prefixed a preface, indicating as usual the activity and diffusiveness of his genius, his power of eliciting general truths from the most unpromising facts, and of throwing unexpected light on subjects but little connected with one another.

Another work, which originated in the task imposed upon him by the elector, consisted of his 'Accessiones

* During these travels, a curious incident happened to him. He was once overtaken in a small vessel, on the coast of Italy, by a furious tempest, which the sage skipper attributed to the presence of the heretical German. Presuming him ignorant of the language, he and his crew began to deliberate on the propriety of throwing the 'Lutheran Jonas' (as M. Jaucourt expresses it) overboard. Leibnitz, with much presence of mind, took out a rosary which he happened to have with him, and began to tell his beads with vehement devotion. The *ruse* succeeded.

Historicæ,' published in 1698. It is in fact a mass of the odds and ends of his multifarious collections; many of them rare documents, which had been buried in public libraries, and had escaped the vigilance of previous inquirers. In order to finish here all notice of the series of publications which had their origin in the request of the elector, we may remark, that it was not till 1707, nearly twenty years after he set out on his travels, that the first portion of any work exclusively bearing on his subject saw the light; and that consisted only of a collection of the writers on the affairs of Brunswick.* The second and third volumes appeared in 1710 and 1711. This extensive work *was* to have been succeeded by a work on the History of Brunswick itself and its Illustrious House; that is, by the work which for twenty years he had been preparing to write, but of which, alas! only the plan has been published; the unfinished manuscript still lying in the dust of the Royal Library of Hanover.†

In truth, his plan was so whimsically extensive, that it would have taken more than his life to complete it. The work was to have commenced by a dissertation on the possible state of Germany some thousands of years before the creation; in other words, on its geology. He has recorded his general opinions in an essay entitled 'Protogæa,' which appeared after his death, and an abstract of which was inserted in the Journal of Leipzic, 1693.

Having thus settled the state of Germany as it was before the creation of man, he was to proceed to a copious account of what it was after that era, but still long before the dawn of authentic history;—to trace the migrations and settlements of the remote tribes and nations which have successively occupied it—treating, by the way, of their languages and dialects;

* Scriptores Rerum Brunsvicensium illustrationi inservientes.

† Dr. Guhrauer gives us reason to expect that this fragment will soon see the light.

topics of which it might be difficult for any body but Leibnitz to see the connexion with the history of Brunswick, but which were doubtless infinitely more to his taste.

Having thus, as it may be thought, laid a moderately solid foundation for the pyramid of his projected work, Leibnitz was to set about the history of Brunswick in earnest; of course commencing with the very remotest times, gathering materials from the obscurest sources, gently deviating to the right and left as occasion might or might not require, to take in the history of the various branches of the House of Brunswick, as well as that of all the Houses with which they might have formed alliances; and pleasingly diversifying the matter with collateral disquisitions on various points of heraldry, genealogy, and especially chronology; all which subjects were to be illustrated by an ample appendix of suitable engravings of medals, arms, ancient monuments, and so forth. In short, the work would doubtless have been publishing in successive volumes to this day, if Leibnitz and his patron had lived as long: and subscribers or their heirs would still have been able only to predict the appearance of the *last* volume. We have been more minute than the generality of the biographers of Leibnitz on this subject; because the mode in which he prosecuted his task, the immense gyrations of thought in which he indulged, the number of subjects which were successively taken up, the eagerness with which he pursued each, the gigantic scale on which he framed his plan, and, not least of all, the scanty fragments he left of the whole, are so remarkably characteristic of his genius and his habits.

Let us now resume the sketch of his history. In 1699 he was chosen member of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris; and in the following year he induced the Elector of Brandenburg, afterwards king of Prussia, to found an Academy of Sciences at Berlin,

of which he was made perpetual president. The publications of this society he afterwards enriched with various valuable contributions.

A communication from Bouvet on the Chinese characters, suggested to Leibnitz another of his life-long projects, doomed, like so many others, to be left incomplete,— that of a Universal Language. On this project, more than one able man had toiled before Leibnitz, and more than one has toiled since, but all fruitlessly. It seems, in truth, to be one of the most hopeless of human schemes. But its very difficulty had charms for Leibnitz; and he expresses himself in many parts of his writings with a confidence of success which is amusingly characteristic. He did not think 'that the great men who had preceded him had been on the right tack. He contemplated the invention of a totally novel system, of which the characters should resemble as much as possible those of algebra.' He appears to have expended immense thought upon this subject; yet nothing was found in his papers after his death, except some trifling hints.

He had, it is true, directed a young man to devise and arrange exact definitions of all sorts of ideas — in itself not one of the least formidable difficulties of the projected enterprise, and which Leibnitz had better have reserved for his own shoulders. 'Though he applied himself,' says M. Jaucourt, 'to this investigation as early as 1703, his life, dissipated by a hundred different occupations, was not long enough for the execution of this design.' That man would assuredly have an antediluvian lease of life who should live till he had invented a Universal Language.

In the year 1710, Leibnitz published his 'Theodicée' — properly speaking, his only complete work; certainly the only one which gives us a just image of the whole intellect of the man. Its principal object is to refute the sceptical views which Bayle had inserted

in his 'Dictionary,' touching the goodness of God, the liberty of man, and the origin of evil.

We shall make a few remarks on this work in a future page. In the mean time, we may observe that such doubts were entertained of the orthodoxy of Leibnitz, that several able men—amongst the rest, Plaff and Le Clerc—were persuaded he was of the opinions of Bayle himself, and that the 'Theodicée' was but a *jeu d'esprit*. Never was there a more extravagant charge preferred against any man; it is contradicted alike by the whole internal evidence of the book, by the circumstances which had elicited it, and by the general tone in which he refers to it throughout his correspondence. The accusation could have been founded only on some misconceived ironical expressions, and on the very courteous and charitable tone adopted towards opponents.

In 1711, he was invited to a conference with Peter the Great at Torgau, whither the Russian monarch had come, to be present at the celebration of the marriage between his son Alexis and the Princess of Wolfenbüttel. Leibnitz was highly gratified, and with some reason. In addition to honours and a pension conferred, there was held out the flattering prospect of being employed in the formation of the future code of that great empire, which the czar was creating. It was on the provisions of this code that the prince had consulted him.

In 1714, Queen Anne died. Leibnitz was at Vienna when the King left Hanover for his new dominions, but had an opportunity of paying his homage in 1715, when George I. again visited the electorate.

From this period the health of Leibnitz, already shattered by frequent attacks of gout, which had grievously tormented him for many years, rapidly declined. As he knew much of most things, and something of every thing, so he had not entirely neglected Medicine, and was a little inclined, as many such men are, to play the doctor in his own case. It is said by

some, that the immediate cause of his death was an unhappy experiment with an untried remedy. This event took place, on the 14th of November, 1716, in the seventieth year of his age.*

Leibnitz has left behind him a sketch in Latin of his principal physical and mental peculiarities, expressed with his usual frankness, and we might even say with a characteristic egotism. From this sketch we extract the following traits:—After some whimsical remarks on his temperament and that of his family, he tells us that his 'stature is of the middle height and graceful, his face pale, hands generally cold, &c. &c.; his eyesight keen, his voice rather shrill than strong; that he had some little difficulty in pronouncing the gutturals, especially *k*.' He tells us that 'his night's rest was uninterrupted,' for which he gives us a curious reason—'Quod sero cubitum it, et lucubrationes studiis matutinis longe præfert.'† There are many students who, with the same habits, have not experienced the same happy results from them. 'His mode of life from childhood was sedentary; from a boy he read much and meditated more, and in most things was self-taught, *αὐτοδίδακτος*.' The next is certainly a characteristic trait, but would have been as well recorded by somebody else. 'He was ambitious of more profoundly investigating everything than is customary with the vulgar, and of inventing new things.' He also tells us 'he was endowed with a most excellent invention and judgment; and found it no matter of difficulty to apply, in immediate succession, to the most various employments; reading

* Dr. Guhrauer has given a full account of his last illness (vol. ii. pp. 328—330.)

† He often did not retire to his couch at all, but sat till a late hour, took two or three hours' sleep in his chair, and then proceeded to his work again at early dawn. This plan he is said sometimes to have pursued night after night for weeks together. No wonder he had gout, and towards the close of life, ulcerated and œdematous extremities!

writing, speaking extempore, and investigating any intellectual subject, when necessary, even to the bottom.'* He further informs us, 'that he was easily made angry and easily pacified; that he was neither very sad nor very merry; that his joy and grief were alike moderate, and that he more frequently smiled than laughed.' (Risus frequentius os diducit quam pectus convertit.)

One or two other traits may be amusing to the reader as parts of a great man's portrait of himself. They will be found below.†

The intellectual character of Leibnitz is very remarkable, and well worthy of careful analysis. He has been called, and with much justice, 'an universal genius.' His powers were most various and versatile, harmoniously proportioned one to another, and individually vast; each colossal, and all symmetrical. If he failed, and fail he often did, it was not from a deficiency in the powers requisite for the prosecution of science in almost any direction, but from the ambition of universal conquest—of knowing every thing, and achieving every thing. In his desire of gaining new victories, he was too apt to leave behind him provinces but half conquered. Such was his versatility, that, as Fontenelle and Jaucourt have observed, he really does not seem to have manifested any predilection for any one branch of science more than another, though it was unquestionably in Mathematics that he was most fitted to excel. His powers of acquisition were astonishing; his memory, like that of

* 'Whence I infer,' says he, 'cerebrum ei esse siccum et spirituosum,' 'that his brain is dry and spirituous!'

† 'Conversationis appetentia non multa; major meditationis et lectionis solitariæ. Implicatus autem conversationi satis jucunde eam continuat, sermonibus jocosis et gratis magis delectatus, quam lusu, aut exercitiis in motu consistentibus. . . . . Timidus est in re aliqua inchoanda, audax in prosequenda.'

most great men, was equally rapid in appropriating, and tenacious in retaining, whatever was presented to it. At the age of seventy, he could recite hundreds of lines of *Virgil* without an error; and such was his knowledge of books and their contents, that George I. was wont to call him his 'living dictionary.'

His attainments corresponded with his versatile powers, and his ever active industry. In every department of science and literature — in metaphysics, physics, jurisprudence, theology, philology, history, antiquities, the classics, and polite letters — he seems to have been almost equally versed, and in all deeply. Realms of learning even then almost neglected, as the Scholastic Philosophy, or only professionally studied, as the writings of the Fathers, had charms for him. The ancient languages he knew well, and was tolerably acquainted with more than half a dozen of the modern.*

And this versatility, as it appears in his acquisitions, so does it also in his writings, wherein he successively appears in the character of a philosopher, theologian, mathematician, jurist, historian, antiquary, and even — *poet*. It is true that in this last character he performs but indifferently. His imagination, though sufficiently active to supply apt illustrations to his argumentative prose, wanted the activity and the brilliancy which can alone make the poet. Yet he evidently regarded with some complacency this feature of his mind; and often mentions a certain feat of his early years with considerable satisfaction — the composition of three hundred verses in one day, and without making a single elision. In another sense of that word, we may say with more justice

* 'Cette lecture universelle,' says Fontenelle with his customary elegance, 'jointe à un grand génie naturel, le fit devenir tout ce qu'il avait lû; pareil en quelque sort aux anciens qui avaient l'addresse de mener jusqu' à huit chevaux attelés de front, il mena de front toutes les sciences.'

than Ben Jonson said of Shakspeare, 'that it would have been well if he had made a thousand.'

One striking peculiarity in the case of Leibnitz is, that his activity in the accumulation of knowledge, and his powers of original speculation, enormous as they both were, seem to have been indulged in almost equal measure. Usually it is not so. A mind distinguished by much inventiveness, generally subordinates to that one quality all the powers of acquisition: this it is which determines the direction, as well as limits the extent, of all mere reading. And more especially is it the case in minds which, like that of Leibnitz, are distinguished by inventiveness in the departments of abstract science, and most of all in mathematics; where the demands on the excogitative faculties are so great as to leave comparatively little time or inclination for the accumulation of miscellaneous knowledge. Books, in these cases, are merely used as aids to thought; they are tools to work with, and nothing more. Leibnitz loved them for their own sake; he read as much as he thought, and thought as much as he read, and seemed to take equal delight in both employments, and in all directions. In him the love of knowledge, enormously as it was indulged, was never a mere passive principle: devouring all kinds of books, he yet never mechanically appropriated their contents, but made them his own, by subjecting them to the powerful assimilative processes of his own intellect. The appetite was scarcely disproportionate to the activity of digestion.

It is true, that as it is not given to the human intellect to expatiate over the whole surface of science with the same success with which it can cultivate some one portion of it, so, even in the case of Leibnitz, there can be no doubt that the experiment was attended with a diminution of power; and that, great as he is in several departments, he would have appeared greater still in some one, had he surrendered himself to it with the same diligence and energy with which

he abandoned himself to all. No rapidity of association, no fecundity of invention, no acuteness of intellect, can make amends for the want of prolonged and patient meditation concentrated in one direction; and it was to this that Locke probably alluded when, in a letter addressed to Molyneux, dated April 10. 1697, he says of Leibnitz—'Even great parts will not master any subject without great thinking, and even the largest minds have but little swallows.'

In Physics and Metaphysics his success was not eminent; nor was this to be wondered at. It arose, assuredly, from no want of subtlety or comprehensiveness; but from his love of hypothesis, his fondness for the purely abstract, and his impatience to arrive at a solution. All these prevented a docile observance of the maxims of the Inductive Philosophy. Any theory that plausibly accounted for the phenomena was apt to find favour in his eyes. Indeed, he never seems to have attained any clear views of the limits within which the human understanding can hopefully speculate at all; and pronounces with as much assurance on the ultimate constitution and properties of his *Monads*, as he would upon any commonplace facts whatever. 'Monads,' says he, 'are simple substances which enter into the constitution of composite. . . . Each is a mirror representing the universe, though obscurely. . . . Each soul (âme) knows to infinity, knows every thing, but confusedly.'*

* See his 'Principia Philosophiæ,' and 'Principes de la Nature et de la Grace, fondés en Raison:' passim. Dutens' edition, tom. ii. pp. 20—39. Sir James Mackintosh, with his usual charity, endeavours to find a meaning for Leibnitz, and supposes that when he says that each Monad is 'a mirror of the universe,' and 'knows every thing confusedly,' he means nothing more than that 'all parts of the universe are connected,' and 'that no part remains the same, when that of any other is changed.' If this be so, we ask, first—What business has a metaphysician to deliver his doctrines in extravagant metaphor? And, secondly, Whether mere change of relation can be called *knowledge* (whether distinct or confused,) without the grossest abuse of language?

His very notions on this subject, though frequently repeated in his works, he has never been able to express so as to convey a clear idea of his meaning to his disciples; who, as Brucker has justly remarked, have been involved in hopeless perplexities in their attempts to interpret their master's language. It is obvious, however, mean what he would, or nothing at all, that neither Leibnitz nor any one else could *know* any thing upon such a subject. A man might as well put down any incoherent dream that visited him in the night, and call it philosophy. Who could not philosophise at this rate? Can any thing, indeed, more gratuitous be imagined, if it can be said to be intelligible, than that the universe is full of these ultimate Monads, each of which is — obscurely omniscient, a mirror of the universe, and reflects in infinitely multiplied forms the infinitude of changes throughout universal being? It were less strange to say (for we should, at least, know what was *meant*), that every flutter of a gnat's wing was propagated to the utmost limit of the sphere of the fixed stars. In a like strain of confidence does Leibnitz uniformly speak of his 'Pre-established Harmony;' he is just as certain of its truth as of the truth of his Differential Calculus. Even where successful (we except, of course, the Mathematics), it is rather in his comprehensive suggestions of a possible law or principle, than in rigidly establishing it, — rather in his sagacious anticipations of a great truth, than in ascertaining its exact limits, that his chief merit consists. And it is curious to observe in how many different departments of science this quality of the mind of Leibnitz was manifested. Thus in his 'Protogæa,' he throws out thoughts which, as Dr. Buckland observes, contain the germ of some of the most enlightened speculations of modern Geology. In the department of Philology he often makes the most sagacious observations on the history and affinities of languages, and on the proofs of their identity of

origin: he was probably the first to predict the important connexion—so fruitful of results—which would be found to subsist between philological and historical researches, and the light which the former might be made to shed on the latter. In various parts of his writings, he judiciously points out the best methods of improving Medical science. In a letter, entitled 'Sur la Manière de Perfectionner la Médecine'—he suggests the importance of a system of complete statistics of public health and disease; in his controversy with Stahl, he urges the study of Anatomy, then in its infancy; and expresses his confident belief that the time would come when Surgery would be capable of dealing with many diseases that were then the opprobria of Medical science.* In other places, he indicates the important bearing of his favourite science, Mathematics, on various branches of political and economical philosophy. The merit in all these cases consists in the first germinant thought, (evincing the active and inventive quality of his mind,) rather than in the exact application or full development of it. We may say of such proofs of sagacity, as Sir James Mackintosh said of Horne Tooke's theory, 'the beauty was in the original conception, rather than in the accuracy with which it was applied.' But it is in these prophetic glimpses of prolific truths, in almost every department of science,—truths which it was left for after ages fully to evolve and establish,—that Leibnitz has entitled himself to a place with almost all the very greatest minds—with Aristotle, with Bacon, and with Newton; in all of whom the same quality was remarkably exemplified. It is given to such minds alone to pre-

* 'Spes est, aliquando aquam inter cutem aliaque noxia non minore certitudine sublatam iri; aliasque aperturas, separationes, reparationes, correctiones, in potestate fore, quæ nunc habentur desperatæ; itaque reipublicæ interest nihil omitti, quod ad spem futuri progressûs facere possit.'—*Opera Omnia*, tom. ii. pars ii. p. 147.

dict and foreshadow the coming dispensations of philosophy;—to catch from the mountain heights of their contemplations (if we may modify a thought which has occurred to more than one writer) the first radiance of the rising sun, when to the rest of this world's inhabitants he is still below the horizon.

In the variety and grandeur even of his unfinished projects, embracing such different objects, and grappling with such tremendous difficulties, we see the sublime audacity and versatility of his genius; as well as a proof that not even the intellect of a Leibnitz can prosecute successfully half a score of pursuits at once. The *manner* in which he speaks of these unfinished projects, of which he seems hopeful even to the last, displays no less the hardy confidence of his nature,—often degenerating into an appearance of ostentation and vanity; and, in truth, it requires all our knowledge of what he has accomplished to induce us to pardon his unfulfilled promises. His never completed Calculating Machine—his fragment of an Universal Alphabet—his improved Watches which were never constructed—his Hydraulic and Pneumatic Engines, which existed only in theory—his Swift Carriages*, which existed only in imagination, were monuments alike of his enterprise and his temerity.

We have said that Leibnitz was equally distinguished by his love of amassing knowledge, and his capacity for original speculation. It is curious to see the intensity with which the purely literary element operated upon him, and the manner in which it is

* In our railroad era, it is curious to find that one of the extravagances charged upon Leibnitz by one of his traducers, is that of having conceived it possible to construct carriages by which the journey from Hanover to Amsterdam (about 150 miles) might be accomplished in four-and-twenty hours. Leibnitz, in his defence, affirms, that this is too extravagant a charge to be believed! 'Leibnitz,' says M. Jaucourt, 'was not altogether a fool.'

perpetually manifested. Even his closest and most novel reasonings are continually interrupted by references to authors, and citations from their works. He abounds in curious anecdotes of past literature, and takes almost as eager an interest in the *history* of philosophy and science, as in the extension of their limits. This quality, in conjunction with the suavity of his temper, has given one great charm to his general manner. With one unhappy exception — we refer, of course, to the contest respecting the Differential Calculus — it is impossible to imagine a controversial spirit more fair and candid; nor was there ever a taste in literature more catholic than his. He ever seems to differ from others with reluctance, — to diminish the interval of disagreement as much as possible — and to discover resemblances, where none but himself, can perceive them. He has given an amusing account of his efforts, when a youth of only fifteen, during long solitary walks in the wood of Rosenthal, near Leipsic, to adjust the claims of the Ancients and Moderns — of Aristotle and Descartes; and the reluctance with which, when conciliation was impossible, he was compelled to make an election. His spirit was truly Eclectic; and so far from exaggerating the originality of his own conceptions, he is generally anxious to show that there are some traces of them, more or less faint, to be found in the preceding history of philosophy. Even when threading his way through the most intricate and untrodden wilds of speculation, his truly social spirit loves not to be alone; he delights in searching for impressions, though half obliterated, of footsteps that have been there before him; to follow the *trail* of humanity, as the Indians would say, even though it be only by a broken twig, or the down-trodden grass, or the ashes of a long-extinguished watch-fire.

This fair and liberal spirit certainly forms one of the greatest charms in his controversial writings. It uniformly appears in his judgments on books, in all of

which, however worthless, or however opposed to his own views, he is sure to discover some merits; and indeed it was one of his maxims, that no book was ever written that was altogether without value.

We must now say a few words on his principal writings and opinions.

The 'Theodicée,' originally written in French, is the work on which the fame of Leibnitz as a metaphysician and theologian principally rests; indeed, it is almost the only composition of his which has any pretensions to be considered complete. Most of what he wrote, as before mentioned, was fragmentary: this work certainly has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It is true that, in accordance with that irresistible bias of his nature on which we have already commented, he manages to interweave many topics which are but remotely connected with his principal subject, while his exuberant learning wells forth in every page. On the whole, however, and looking upon it merely as an intellectual effort, it is certainly not unworthy of his name. Unsatisfactory as may be the main argument, much light is thrown on collateral subjects, and many important, though subordinate, topics are treated with great ability. Full of subtlety and acuteness, we admire the originality, even if we do not admit the conclusiveness, of the reasoning. Almost every where we find reflections characterised by German depth of thought, and turned with French vivacity of expression, and these are enlivened by perpetual anecdote, and allusions to literary history. All the aids of learning, and not a few of the graces of imagination, are employed to increase its attractions; while the style, every where perspicuous and elegant, shows the mastery which Leibnitz had attained in the use of a language not his own.

Not the least recommendation of the work is, that, strange as it may seem, the reader may there get a scarcely less ample, and far more connected view, of Leibnitz's whole system of metaphysics and theology,

than from all his other writings put together. From the inseparable connexion which his principal speculations in both these domains of science maintained in his own mind, (however we may fail to perceive that connexion, or even doubt whether he always clearly perceived it himself,) and from the wide circuit of thought in which he habitually indulged, almost all his characteristic doctrines come under review in one part or other of this singular work. Not only does it contain his theory of moral and physical necessity, (which might be looked for,) but his doctrine of monads, his pre-established harmony, his law of continuity, his sufficient reason, his notions of the origin of souls, of generation and dissolution, of space and time.

As to his main hypothesis, constructed to account for the origin of evil, and 'justify the ways of God to man,' *that* has long ago been exploded as unsatisfactory; but it is so, only for the reasons which have made every other attempt of mortals to penetrate that great mystery equally unsatisfactory. We believe that no man ever rose from the perusal of any work on the subject, (if we except the author,) without feeling the conviction that it lies beyond the limits of the human understanding, and that we are simply without data for its solution. That evil should have been permitted to enter the universe under the absolute dominion of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, is a mystery towards the explanation of which man has not made the very smallest conceivable advance. When we are told that this is the 'best of all possible worlds,'—meaning thereby, as Leibnitz takes care to explain, the Universe,—that the complete exclusion of evil was impossible, and that the least possible mixture of it has been admitted, the appeal in fact, is to faith, and not to reason. The answer to the argument is, 'it may be so; we may perhaps even conjecture some grounds of probability for thinking it *is* so; but who shall assure us of it?'

As a matter of pure reasoning, the argument against this hypothesis may be put in a form which we may defy all philosophy to encounter. First, would not a universe without any evil at all be preferable to a universe with some, however little,—to say nothing of a universe in which it cannot be said there *is* very little? and, secondly, can we say that we see any reason why such a universe *could* not be constructed by irresistible power, under the guidance of an infinite wisdom, and both impelled by a goodness equally infinite? We affirm that the *reason* of men can reply to the first of these questions only in the affirmative, and to the second only in the negative. Leibnitz, on the other hand, says 'no' to the first, and 'yes' to the second. But few will discern his *ratio sufficiens* in either answer. It is evident that he, like every other man who pretends to solve the mystery, arrives at his conclusions by a gross *petitio principii;* or rather the whole work is an example of the ὕστερον πρότερον. The very problem is to reconcile the consistency of the attributes of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, with the phenomena of physical and moral evil; and Leibnitz solves it by saying, in effect, that God *is* infinitely wise and good, and therefore cannot but have chosen out of all possibilities the best; *therefore* a universe free from all evil, or even from less than exists, is a contradiction—the very thing, that is, which is required to be shown.

It is very possible that evil may be absolutely inevitable,—we *believe* so, because it has been permitted;—it is even possible that we might *see* this, if we knew all, and that, when we ask that a universe of sentient, intelligent, responsible beings should be created from which evil should be infallibly excluded, we are demanding an impossibility. All we mean is, that this cannot be proved, but is always taken for granted, in every pretended solution of the difficulty. To the considerations which mitigate the difficulties of the subject, we are not blind, but we deny that

they remove them. We are promised a cure of our malady, and we are treated with palliatives; we are told that we shall walk in sunlight, and we find ourselves only in starlight. So is it with the 'Theodicée.'

That he is in fact appealing not to reason but to faith, Leibnitz himself often virtually confesses, and never more explicitly than in the following passage:—'Il est vrai qu'on peut s'imaginer des mondes possibles, sans péché et sans malheur, et on en pourroit faire, comme des Romans, des Utopies, des Severambes; mais ces mêmes mondes seroient d'ailleurs fort inférieurs en bien au nôtre: je ne saurois vous le faire voir en détail: car puis-je connoître, et puis-je vous représenter, des infinis, et les comparer ensemble? mais vous le devez juger avec moi *ab effectu*, puisque *Dieu a choisi ce monde tel qu'il est.*'* After this, one is only puzzled to think how it was possible to fill two volumes on the subject.

It is curious to observe how apt are all writers on this subject to fall into the same fallacy, and beg the question in dispute—even though they may clearly perceive the rock on which others have wrecked their logic. Thus, Lord Brougham, after having, in perhaps the most profound of his writings, very clearly exposed the fallacy of Archbishop King and others;—after fairly acknowledging that the problem is insoluble, and stating with much lucidity and beauty the mitigations founded on the immense preponderance of indications of benevolent design,—falls into precisely the same error, the moment he ceases to demolish theories, and begins himself to build one. After admitting that death is an evil, he says†, 'That man might have been created immortal is not denied; but if it were the will of the Deity to form a limited being, and to place him upon the earth for only a certain period of time, his death was the necessary

* Essais sur la Bonté de Dieu, part i. § 10.
† Dissertations on Paley, vol. ii. p. 71.

consequence of this determination.' Certainly: but why it should have been the will of God to create — not a limited being, for that was inevitable — but a being subject to death and pain, is the very question: — not whether, if God determined to create such a being his death was inevitable. In such a way we might get rid of the whole difficulty of the great problem, by saying, that if it were the will of God to admit evil into the Universe, its admission was the necessary consequence of that determination. Again, his Lordship says *, 'To create sentient beings devoid of all feelings of affection, was no doubt possible to Omnipotence; but to endow those beings with such feelings as should give the constant gratification derived from the benevolent affections, and yet to make them wholly indifferent to the loss of the objects of those affections, was not possible even for Omnipotence; because it was a contradiction in terms equivalent to making a thing both exist and not exist at one and the same time.' Certainly: but, as before, how is it shown to be necessary that these beings should have been subjected to such loss, or a contradiction to suppose them exempt from it? for this is the very question on which we want light. This sharp-sighted writer has, in a word, been betrayed into the very sophism which he has himself so clearly exposed in Archbishop King.† 'The difficult question then,' says the archbishop, 'whence comes evil? is not unanswerable. For it arises from the very nature and constitution of created beings, and could not be avoided without a contradiction.'

But, though we certainly cannot *demonstrate* that this is the 'best of all possible worlds,' and that it was *necessary* that some evil should be admitted, we are far enough from affirming that that faith to which, as we have said, the appeal is sure to be ultimately relegated, is a faith entirely without reason; or that

* Dissertations on Paley, vol. ii. p. 72. † Ibid. p. 34.

it is destitute of those grounds of probability upon which alone an intelligent reliance on the truths, whether of natural or revealed theology, can be maintained. And here the immensely prevailing character of benevolent design which pervades the Universe, contrasted with the fact that evil always appears either simply concomitant, or involved as a consequence, never as an ultimate end, and that an apparent evil is often found to be connected with real good, is of incalculable benefit as suggesting an approximate solution. This confidence is yet further increased, when we see that in proportion as our knowledge advances, many of the ancient objections against the wisdom, and some against the goodness of the constitution of the Universe disappear; — that they were in fact nothing more than the offspring of ignorance. We thus learn to believe that all would vanish in like manner if we were but omniscient. The course of reasoning is much the same as that by which we experimentally establish the first law of motion; it is but an approximate solution, yet satisfactory: or we may compare the anomalies in question to those regressions of the planets which so much perplexed the early astronomers, and which arise from our seeing them from a false centre of observation. Place us in the true centre of the system, and, as science has now shown, all these irregularities disappear. Thus may it also be in the moral world;

> 'All discord, harmony ill understood;
> All partial evil, universal good.'

But, to *believe* this is one thing; to *prove* it, is another.

So strong, however, is the conviction arising from these presumptions, in every well-constituted mind, that probably no man ever reflected, in moments of health, on the exquisite organisation of his body and mind, and their evident adaptation to promote his

happiness; or looked from them outwards and upwards upon the earth and the sky, and saw how there too almost every thing was adjusted to that organisation; that every object was accommodated to our senses, and every sense an inlet of delight; how to the eye all is beauty, and to the ear all music,—without feeling a triumphant consciousness that the Universe must be under the dominion of paternal love; without recoiling from the supposition, as from a most revolting absurdity, that such an Universe can have been the product of malevolence; or that if so, such power and such wisdom should so signally have failed of the end! Nor, probably, has there ever been a sceptic—even he who has brooded longest and most darkly on this most mournful mystery—who has not at times joyfully surrendered himself to this instinctive consciousness,—and felt, with a gush of rapture, that it has at once swept away, as with a pure and healthful breeze, the vapours which a hypochondriacal metaphysics had diffused over his soul. We confess that we lay more stress upon this all but instinctive consciousness in enabling us to encounter the dread problem, than on the subtlest and profoundest metaphysical reasonings which man ever framed.

Apart from his main hypothesis, Leibnitz states the alleviations of this overwhelming difficulty, and the probabilities which may justify the supposition that 'partial evil is universal good,' with characteristic comprehensiveness; and has illustrated them with much vivacity. Thus he remarks, that many things which once appeared only evil, appeared so only to a shallow philosophy, and that as science enlarged, the asserted anomaly vanished;—that some infusion of evil may be necessary to give us the highest possible appreciation of the good; as only he who knows what sickness is, can enjoy the exquisite sensations of health in all their rapture,—a point which he illustrates with a liveliness which reminds

the reader of the celebrated passage at the close of Paley's 'Treatise on Natural Theology;'—that two ingredients, one bitter and one sweet, in the cup of destiny, may make a more pleasant draught than the sweet alone. 'Un peu d'acide, d'acre, ou d'amer, plait souvent mieux que du sucre; les ombres rehaussent les couleurs; et même une dissonance, placée où il faut, donne du relief à l'harmonie.'*

Leibnitz justly remarks, that each man in effect admits that his share of good in life preponderates over the ill, as is proved by the universal reluctance of men to die; and in reply to the objection that no man is willing to live his life over again, he makes this original and just observation, 'that no one would object to take a new lease of life with but a new series of events to vary it.' 'On se contenteroit de varier, sans exiger une meilleure condition que celle où l'on avoit été.'†

Nor does he forget to insist very largely on the fact, (an essential point in his hypothesis, maintaining as it does, that *some* evil was inevitable,) that the amount of evil in the whole Universe, embracing the ample domains of innumerable worlds, the vast 'Civitas Dei,' may be as nothing compared with the amount of good; even though that evil may be absolutely fearful in extent, and eternal in duration. The great speculatist treats this tremendous theme with all the coolness of a veteran geometer. The *ratio* of the good to the evil is every thing with him; he deals with the latter, just as he would with a vanishing quantity in his Differential Calculus. It is sufficient with him, that, be the evil ever so great, the good is infinitely greater; and thus disease, death, sin, and hell only enter as infinitesimals (if we may use the phrase) into his processes of moral differentiation and integration. We confess that, conclusive as is the reasoning which

* Essais sur la Bonté de Dieu, &c. part i. § 12.
† Ibid. § 13.

represents mere geometrical magnitudes as nothing, which are to be compared with quantities 'as many times greater as we please,' we never could derive any consolation from such a species of argument, as applied to those peculiar quantities called 'happiness' and 'misery;' nor be at all more reconciled by it to 'the Origin of Evil.' Each of the beings to whom this logical solace is applied, is a sentient creature, a little world in himself, to whom his weal or woe is no vanishing quantity, no infinitesimal, but a most serious matter; and, as it would be little comfort to such a being, if miserable, to tell him that he was but individually a martyr for the universal good, — that, on Leibnitz's theory, his misery was involved in the choice of the 'best possible world,' and that God could not but choose the 'best,' — so we confess we can derive as little comfort from this mode of viewing him.

One might perhaps modestly suggest to the metaphysician, that each of such beings must have before him an *infinity* of misery; but it would be of no use; for he would still have at hand his doctrine of Ultimate Ratios, and his Differential Calculus. He would say that the individual was but an unimportant function of the Universe; that the increment of happiness on the whole would be infinitely greater than the increment of misery — though it is true, that in each case the weal or woe might be absolutely infinite; and that of two quantities which increase without limit, one may increase so much more rapidly than the other, as not only to increase without limit absolutely, but without limit in the ratio in which it is a multiple of the other.

'The heart of a genuine metaphysician,' says Burke, 'is harder than a piece of the nether millstone.' The heart of Leibnitz was not a hard one; but he was too apt to treat such matters as these, just as he would have treated problems in the higher geometry.

It is, we confess, no alleviation to us to consider as

the *final cause* of the permission of evil, that it may possibly augment the joys of seraphim, or in some ineffable way give a piquancy and gusto to the delights of paradise; though, how it *can* do so, is surely as great a mystery as the 'origin of evil' itself. One would think that pure and benevolent spirits would consent even to be taxed of some portion of their felicity, if they might but thereby obliterate all evil from the Universe; or rather, that this obliteration of evil must necessarily be an augmentation of their happiness. A possibility of deriving gratification from its *presence*, would, one should imagine, be exclusively realised in the opposite quarter of the Universe, and form the characteristic, not of angels, but of demons.

It is true, indeed, that when Leibnitz asserts that the permission of evil is essential to the constitution of his 'best of all possible worlds,' he does not expressly say that it is the 'best,' inasmuch as it involves the largest possible amount of purity and happiness, and that *therefore* evil was permitted that these might be augmented; but he every where implies it: and as the preponderance of these elements is the only intelligible criterion to us of one system of things being 'better' than another, so the supposition that there is *some* other unimaginable sense in which it can be said that some possible world is the 'best,' and that for *this* reason evil was permitted, is wholly gratuitous.

Viewed in any light, this argument of the permission of so much moral and spiritual evil to many, for the *purpose* of securing the happiness of a greater number, is unsatisfactory; for we shall only have the old difficulty re-appearing under a new form, and at another stage. We shall be just as much perplexed to reconcile with our notions of justice and goodness the destination of myriads to misery, for the *purpose* of enhancing the happiness of some multiple of those myriads, as to account for the permission of evil on

any other hypothesis: the *solution* is as difficult as the *problem.* The only answer that could be given would be that conclusive one of the apostle—'How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!'—an answer with which, for aught we can see, we might just as well have rested satisfied a step earlier in the controversy. The question of the 'origin of evil' is like a great cavern, to which there is no second outlet; we may pass through many passages and labyrinths, but we are obliged to turn back at last, and grope our way out by the same way we got in.

On the supposition that evil was absolutely inevitable, or that the Divine Being resolved to permit it, for some reasons consistent with all His attributes, but totally unknown to us, then indeed it is not unworthy of the character of Him whose prerogative it is 'to call light out of darkness,' to subordinate the evil to good, and to yoke the great demon to some useful labour; but to suppose that the *object* of suffering some worlds to be miserable was to render more worlds happy, will always leave a difficulty as trying as the original knot, and not less requiring the sharpest logical shears to cut it.

Leibnitz endeavours to show that evil *was* inevitable;—*natural evil,* as a certain consequence of moral evil, and *moral,* as a possible consequence of metaphysical imperfection. But we must contend that, in our judgment, he wholly fails to show it. Even Omnipotence, says he, cannot work contradictions. The cause of evil is *privation* of perfection, and that which is finite cannot have perfection. Most learnedly said, profound metaphysician! But where is the difficulty, (especially on your favourite hypothesis of moral necessity—in other words, that the only freedom which man can possess, or which is intelligible, is, that he should have the power of acting as he wills, while the *will* itself is infallibly determined by motives,) where, we ask, is the difficulty of supposing

all intelligent beings so constituted, as that, while still perfectly free on this hypothesis, those motives alone should determine them which should determine them for uniform good? 'They cannot be otherwise than free,' you say, 'while they do not act from physical constraint;' now in supposing them morally so constituted as uniformly to obey the dictates of reason, where is there any difficulty, which can be shown to amount to a contradiction, or to limit Omnipotence? If there be such difficulty, show it. Myriads of beings, Leibnitz admits, *must* have been so constituted in order to insure that vast excess of good, which reduces his evil to a vanishing quantity; and why might not *all* have been so constituted?

In this point of view, the advocates of the doctrine of moral necessity, or in other words, (for it is a pity that the ambiguous term 'necessity' was ever admitted into the controversy,) of the *certainty* of all volition as dependent on motives, do not, to say the least, alleviate the difficulties connected with the 'origin of evil.' That hypothesis was, perhaps, first systematically and fully exhibited by Leibnitz; certainly no previous metaphysician, in as far as we know, had made such strenuous or rational efforts to defend it from the charge of encouraging vice as inevitable, or to guard it against the liability to be confounded with vulgar fatalism.* Again and again

* We cannot think that Mr. Dugald Stewart, in his truly admirable remarks on Leibnitz, has done justice to the views of the latter on this subject when he attempts to identify his doctrine with vulgar fatalism. He says, 'the scheme of optimism, as proposed by Leibnitz, is completely subversive of the cardinal truths of man's freewill and moral agency.' He admits, 'that it was viewed in a very different light by the author,' but affirms that 'in the judgment of the most impartial and profound inquirers, it leads, by a short and *demonstrative* process, to the annihilation of all moral distinctions.'—*Preliminary Dissertations to the Seventh Edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica*, p. 127.

It does not appear to us impossible for any one to hold the opinions of Leibnitz on this subject, and yet consistently to deny

does he show that, admitting the doctrine in full, it leaves human conduct under just the same laws and influences as before; impairs no sanction of the one, and diminishes no tittle of the other. Hence exhortations, counsels, persuasion, discipline, chastisement, are full as necessary as ever. Throughout his metaphysical writings, his favourite views on this subject appear; in his 'Theodicée,' in his Appendix to that work, in his annotations on Locke's 'Essay,' especially the chapter on Power; and in the masterly criticisms, in both these works, on the theories of Hobbes and other Necessarians. So comprehensive is his survey of this subject, that there is hardly an argument of Jonathan Edwards' celebrated work on the 'Freedom of the Will' which may not be found stated with almost equal clearness in some part or other of the writings of Leibnitz; if not with such rigid logical concatenation, yet with far more fecundity and aptness of illustration. The great Transatlantic Divine does not, more completely than Leibnitz, demolish that great phantom of the 'liberty of indifference,' which asserts the will to be free only when it acts absolutely without motive, and its highest prerogative to consist in its emancipation from all

that *demonstrative* process to which Mr. Stewart refers; nor do we think that the latter (candid as he is) has duly appreciated Leibnitz's jealous caution in guarding against the abuses of the doctrine. That caution breaks out even in the preface to his 'Theodicée,' where he has stated (pp. 14—19.), with great clearness and eloquence, the differences between the *fatum Mahometanum* and his scheme of moral necessity. He even goes to the verge of what some may think a self-destructive candour. 'Il est faux que l'évènement arrive quoiqu'on fasse; il arrivera, parcequ'on fait ce qui y mène: et si l'évènement est écrit, la cause qui le fera arriver est écrite aussi. Ainsi la liaison des effets et des causes, bien loin d'établir la doctrine d'une nécessité préjudiciale à la pratique, sert à la détruire.' Sir James Mackintosh has made some most judicious observations on this subject, in his admirable review, in this journal, of Mr. Stewart's above-mentioned Dissertation. We concur with him in thinking, that justice has not been done to Leibnitz on this point.—*Edinburgh Review*, vol. xxxvi.

reason; which, in fact, makes man, as a condition of his responsibility, act in such a way, that, if he could act at all, his acts would be absolutely destitute of all moral quality. Whether Jonathan Edwards ever read the 'Theodicée,' we know not; but if so, he must have been under no little obligations to it.

It may be thought at first, that if we could but admit that chimera of 'a liberty of indifference,' it were easy to account for the origin of evil, or indeed the origin of any thing else; for who could account for the acts of a will which would be a synonyme for caprice; or wonder that man, poised for a moment in such a state of 'unstable equilibrium,' should fall? But then, alas! we fear there would be just as much difficulty in proving the existence of this nonentity, or the *possibility* of its existing in a sentient and intelligent creature surrounded with such enticing forms of real and apparent good, or the moral quality of the blind volitions decreed by it, or the propriety of punishing or rewarding its absurdities—as can be found in the Origin of Evil itself. It would be appealing to that 'Anarch old,'

'Who, by deciding, more embroils the fray.'

Thus are we reduced to inextricable difficulties on all sides. But let us be comforted. We are in no worse condition with respect to this great mystery of the 'origin of evil,' except that it is connected with misery, than in relation to similar inextricable difficulties in every other field of speculation. These difficulties meet us wherever we speculate, and introduce us at last to two propositions, which seem almost parts of a contradiction; of which, however, we are assured there must be a reconciling harmony, though we cannot detect it. We are enclosed in a narrow prison, shut in with adamantine bars and impassable walls: and when we gaze through the chinks which here and there let in what is after all but a mental twilight, we gaze into the depths of infinity. This

every philosopher finds. The chemist analyses material substances, and analyses again the results of his analysis, but cannot come to an end. He seems ever almost on the brink of discovering the ultimate organisation of matter, which yet eludes, and will probably ever elude him; he finds, as Bacon truly said, that 'the subtilty of nature far surpasses the subtilty of either sense or intellect.'—The arguments for the infinite divisibility of matter, and for its not being infinitely divisible, are both unanswerable, and yet answer one another.—That there is something we call a Cause, we believe, but cannot perceive or trace any thing more than uniform antecedence and sequence.—How two substances, such as mind and matter, if they be supposed essentially different, can act upon one another, is an inscrutable mystery; and yet those find themselves pressed with difficulties equally insurmountable, who, to get rid of it, annihilate matter and substitute ideas, or annihilate mind and make matter think.—In like manner, we cannot refute the doctrine of the absolute certainty of human volitions, as dependent on motive; and can as little eradicate the consciousness which proclaims us to be free, and responsible for our freedom. We see the reasonableness of either assertion, but the *nexus* which binds them in harmony baffles our perceptions.

Happy is he who, recognising the limits imposed on the speculative powers of man, refuses to chafe at them; and, instead of wearing his strength by fruitless efforts to shake the iron portals, or dashing himself against the walls of his prison, is willing to believe it possible that there are many things true which now sound like contradictions; and instead of 'being wise above what is written,' whether in the volume of Revelation or of Nature, (which, as Bishop Butler has shown, is inscribed with hieroglyphics equally dark,) commits himself to probabilities where demonstration deserts him; and, in the mean time, awaits that glorious dawn which shall let in, on the

child of dust, the light of eternity, and either clear up the mysteries which baffle him, or leave him contented with his ignorance. Ignorant, indeed—infinitely ignorant—with all his knowledge, he will ever be; for it is the necessary condition of a finite intellect, that it will never comprehend those problems which demand an infinite intellect to solve; and it is possible that the full comprehension of the 'Origin of Evil' may be of the number.

In the present scene of things, at all events, we must acquiesce in something less than demonstration; and most cordially do we concur with Leibnitz, when he says, 'The harmony which is found in all the rest of the Universe, forms a strong presumption that we should also find it in the government of man, and generally in that of the entire spiritual world, if all were but known to us. It becomes us to judge of the works of God not less wisely than Socrates judged of those of Heraclitus, when he said, "What I understand pleases me well; and I believe that the rest would please me no less, if I understood it."' Nor are even the hypotheses men may frame on this subject without use, if, without pretending to remove every difficulty, they but assist us in conceiving that there may be methods of explaining this terrible mystery, though we cannot perfectly comprehend them. We fully appreciate, for this reason, the sublime passage with which Leibnitz thus closes the first part of his 'Theodicée:'—'These attempts of our reason, in which there is no necessity of absolutely confining ourselves to certain hypotheses, only serve to make us conceive that there may be a thousand ways of justifying the conduct of God; and that all the evils we see, and all the difficulties we suggest to ourselves, ought not to prevent our believing (when we cannot know by demonstration), that there is nothing so exalted as the wisdom of God, nothing so just as his judgments, nothing so pure as his holiness, and nothing more immense than his goodness.'

After perusing such lofty sentiments as these, few could sympathise with the ridicule which is poured on the 'Theodicée' in Voltaire's 'Le Candide,' even if the mocking satirist had confined himself to what was really sophistical in the work of Leibnitz, and had not indulged his sarcasms against the whole order of the universe. If we were reduced to the melancholy alternative of choosing between an ennobling but illogical faith, and a logical but debasing reason, no where more wisely than here could we use Cicero's 'Errare malo cum Platone,' and say, 'Better to be wrong with Leibnitz than right with Voltaire.'

Blindly fond as philosophers are apt to be of their pet theories, perhaps there never was a more capricious instance of this paternal instinct than Leibnitz's affection for his *Pre-established Harmony*. Of the many theories which have been invented to account for the phenomena of perception, and to get rid of the supposed connexion of mind and matter, none was ever more groundless than this; and yet to none of them have their authors attached the hundredth part of the importance which Leibnitz attached to his. The supposition that the movements of body and of mind are as totally distinct (to use his own favourite and oft-repeated illustration) as those of two timepieces exquisitely correct, and that the former, like the latter, agree only in the perfect simultaneity with which they are performed, is really one of the most monstrous and even self-destroying hypotheses ever framed. According to that theory, to adopt the illustration of Bayle, 'the body of Cæsar must have performed all its acts, though it had pleased God to have annihilated Cæsar's soul the day after it was created;' or as Dr. Thomas Brown puts it, 'the soul of Leibnitz would, though his body had been annihilated at birth, have felt and acted as if with its bodily appendage—studying the same works, inventing the same systems, and carrying on with the same warfare of books and epistles the same long course of inde-

fatigable controversy;—and the body of this great philosopher, though his *soul* had been annihilated at birth, would not merely have gone through the same process of growth, eating and digesting, and performing all its other ordinary functions, but would have achieved for itself the same intellectual glory, without any consciousness of the works which it was writing and correcting—would have argued with equal strenuousness for the principle of the Sufficient Reason, claimed the honours of the Differential Calculus, and laboured to prove this very system of the Pre-established Harmony, of which it would certainly, in that case, have been one of the most illustrious examples.'*

Now, what proof can we ever have of the existence of a material world, if we accept a theory, the precise object of which is to sever all connexion between it and the percipient mind? The very machinery of that material world, and its whole series of movements, are supposed to be concealed behind an impenetrable curtain, and to be wholly independent of the world of mental phenomena. The existence of a material world, therefore, is entirely assumed by the very terms of the theory; and the theory itself is consequently far more naturally connected with a purely ideal system. Indeed, Leibnitz himself seems much more inclined to adopt some modification of that system, than to admit the real existence of the material world, in the ordinary sense of these words. Some curious statements to this effect may be found in the *Eclaircissements*, by which, not without reason, he attempts to remove objections to his theory.† We

* Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind, vol. ii. p. 116.

† 'Nous concevons *l'étendue* en concevant un ordre dans les coéxistences; mais nous ne devons pas la concevoir, non plus que l'espace, à la façon d'une substance. C'est comme le *tems*, qui ne présente à l'esprit qu'un ordre dans les changemens. Et quant au *mouvement*, ce qu'il y a de réel est la force ou la puissance, c'est-à-dire, ce qu'il y a dans l'état présent, qui porte avec soi un

shall not insist upon subtle arguments against a theory on which, though it may have found some advocates in the age of Leibnitz, certainly has not a single adherent in our day. To suppose a material world, all the movements of which, so to speak, are parallel and coincident with those of mind, but totally disconnected with them, and created to answer no assignable or imaginable purpose, is surely to impute to the Deity a most clumsy, cumbrous, irrational method of procedure. Yet Leibnitz principally values himself on having excogitated a system, which opens to us the most sublime views of that Omnipotence which could thus effect an entire harmony and parallelism, in the infinitely complicated and varied functions of two perfectly heterogeneous and separate substances. And if mere intricacy and superfluous complexity of apparatus were the highest trophy of wisdom, there would be some force in this reasoning: but as long as it is true, that simplicity in the means conjoined with variety in the ends is an attribute of the works of the Supreme Being, we may well doubt whether this theory be any very notable compliment to the Deity. In this system, as well as in every other which the impatience of philosophers has suggested, for the purpose of ridding themselves of a supposed interaction of two totally distinct substances, our sages forget, while magnifying the sublime views which their respective theories give us of the Divine Power and Wisdom necessary to realise them, that there is a very simple way of still more effectually

changement pour l'avenir.'—*Opera Omnia*, vol. ii. p. 79. But he expresses himself yet more strongly towards the close of his career. In the last year of his life, in a letter to M. Dangicourt, he says,—'Je suis d'opinion qu'à parler exactement il n'y a point de substance étendue. C'est pourquoi j'appelle la matière non "substantiam" sed "substantiatum." J'ai dit en quelques endroits (peutêtre de la Theodicée, si je ne me trompe) que la matière n'est qu'un phénomène réglé et exact, qui ne trompe point quand on prend garde aux règles abstraites de la raison.'

doing justice to that power and wisdom; namely, by supposing it possible that the Divine Being may effect a mysterious connexion between two perfectly distinct substances, though the philosopher cannot conceive it possible; and in a way which may far more transcendently display the infinitude of the divine resources, than the realisation of any complicated scheme of his could do. But this would just be humbly to admit certain ordinary facts which all the world admits, and few are the philosophers who can submit to that. It is much more pleasant to them, having condescendingly decided for the Deity the question of what is possible and what is impossible, and having relieved Him from the necessity of performing the latter, to devise a scheme which will still afford ample scope for His omnipotence. — On the moral difficulties which beset this and every other theory which would get rid of a material world, we have not spoken. But we cannot help thinking that the ideal theory is hardly consistent with the most worthy views of the Creator. Considering the deep, universal, indelible impression of an external world of matter, it seems hard to reconcile it with the supposition of His perfect truthfulness, to imagine Him the projector of a general system of illusion. So strong is the impression of the existence of a material world, that immaterialists have acknowledged that they find it impossible to eradicate it; and we have known disciples of Bishop Berkeley who have ingenuously confessed, that, somehow, the conviction haunted them, that 'the solitary palm still exists in the desert after the traveller has passed it, and is not an ideal phenomenon, to be reproduced after a certain interval to another mind.' This invincible belief, like the voice of conscience in the moral world, may be regarded as a species of revelation.

Extravagant as the system of 'The Pre-established Harmony' may now appear, certain it is that Newton himself would not have ventured to predicate such

glorious things of his true system of the Universe, as Leibnitz does of his supposed sublime discovery. It was to be the grand reconciling principle of at least half a dozen different, and in some respects contradictory, theories; it was to bring Aristotle and Plato, Descartes and Malebranche, into happy harmony; it was to redound to the glory of God, and silence the controversies of man. It is thus he speaks of it under his assumed name of *Theophile*, in an amusing passage of the first chapter of his 'Dialogues on Locke's Essay:'—'J'ai été frappé d'un nouveau système, dont j'ai lû quelque chose dans les journaux des savans de Paris. . . . Depuis, je crois voir une nouvelle face de l'intérieur des choses. Ce système parait allier Platon avec Démocrite, Aristote avec Descartes, les scholastiques avec les modernes, la théologie et la morale avec la raison. Il semble qu'il prend le meilleur de tous côtés, et que puis après il va plus loin qu'on n'est allé encore.' And so he goes on for two or three pages, with equally or more extravagant promises of this wonder-working theory. The other imaginary dialogist, *Philalethe*, may well say, 'Vous m'étonnez en effet avec toutes les merveilles, dont vous me faites un récit un peu trop avantageux pour que je les puisse croire facilement.'

Into the long controversy between Leibnitz and Newton, which so much embittered the latter years of both, we have already declared our intention of not entering further than is rendered necessary by the remarks of Dr. Guhrauer; who is disposed, in his zeal to do justice to the memory of his great countryman, to urge those claims not a little unwisely.

Most persons of the present day, who have investigated the subject, have pretty well made up their minds as to the following points: first, that the system of Fluxions is essentially the same with that of the Differential Calculus—differing only in notation; secondly, that Newton possessed the secret of

Fluxions as early as 1665—nineteen years before Leibnitz *published* his discovery, and eleven before he communicated it to Newton; thirdly, that both Leibnitz and Newton discovered their methods independently of one another—and that, though the latter was the prior inventor, the former was also truly *an* inventor.

With regard to the *first* of the three points above mentioned,—the alleged identity of the two methods,—Dr. Guhrauer is disposed to demur, and contends that the claims of Newton and Leibnitz could not interfere, as they respected two *different* discoveries. Speaking of Sir David Brewster's affirmation, in his 'Life of Newton,' that the latter was the *first*, and Leibnitz the *second* inventor, he says, 'There is, in truth, no *first* and no *second* in the discovery of dissimilar things.'* This we cannot but think uncandid, though he endeavours to justify his views by quoting the opinion of M. Biot, that 'were the discovery of Leibnitz to be made even now, it would be considered a surprising creation, and must still be acquired, supposing nothing more than the method of Newton, as it is contained in his works, existed.' This is not precisely the same as saying that the two things are 'dissimilar,' as Dr. Guhrauer boldly affirms; neither do the assertions of Euler, Lagrange, Laplace, Poisson, also referred to by him, amount to as much.

We do not think that the advocates of Leibnitz wisely consult his fame, by advancing claims that certainly are not tenable. To whatever point of perfection beyond Newton, Leibnitz may have carried his Calculus†, we need not hesitate to say, that a

* Es giebt nemlich keinen ersten, und keinen zweiten, in der Erfindung unähnlicher Dinge.—Vol. i. p. 180.

† See some excellent remarks on this subject, in Professor De Morgan's 'Differential and Integral Calculus,' p. 32–34. Even the mathematical treatises of this gentleman disclose his extensive researches into the history of his favourite science, and his

decision as to whether the two methods be *essentially* the same or not, may be regarded as a test of controversial candour or perverseness. Any one competently acquainted with both, and not afflicted with polemical *strabismus*, would as soon affirm, that German printed in the German type was a different language from German printed in the Roman type, as that the methods of Fluxions and of Differences were essentially distinct things; he would as soon affirm that two systems of Stenography, each employing the same principles of abbreviation, and differing only in the characters, were essentially different. Whether Leibnitz was truly an independent inventor of this method—in principle identical with that of Fluxions—is the only question in our judgment, that really affects his fair fame; and that he *was* so, is now, we may say, all but universally conceded. Involved and complicated as the question became through the passions and prejudices of contemporary controvertists, its solution really depends upon one very simple question, which we are in a much better position to answer fairly than the heated disputants of that age. It is this,—Was Leibnitz capable of committing the vilest literary larceny, and persisting, to conceal it, in a detestably mean and deliberate falsehood? If not, (and there are few but will acquit him, who consider the general frankness and openness of his nature, the freedom with which he communicated his own discoveries, and the candour with which he congratulated others on theirs,) then is he entitled to the honours of independent invention. If he *was* capable of such conduct, then

accurate knowledge of it; while none can read his admirable historic notices, and biographical sketches of celebrated mathematicians, inserted in various publications, without wishing for something more systematic from the same pen. A history of Mathematical Science, less voluminous than that of Montucla, and more full than the sketch of Bossut, is a *desideratum* in literature; and probably no man has ever combined the requisites for such a work more happily than Professor De Morgan.

no evidence can satisfy the doubter; for there was assuredly one period during which there was a possibility of deriving advantage from the previous discovery of Newton. The matter stands briefly thus. In the year 1666, Newton, when but twenty-four years of age, was already in possession of the system of Fluxions. Either wishing to exhibit his method in a more perfect form than he had then leisure to impart to it, or desirous of reserving his discovery for his own exclusive benefit, he did not publish it,—though he communicated the outlines of it to some of his friends, and, amongst the rest, to Dr. Barrow. The papers were lent by Barrow to Mr. Collins, who, unknown to Newton, took a copy of them, and who showed them to Oldenburg; and as these gentlemen, to use the language of the Royal Society, were very free in communicating to continental mathematicians what was going on at home; as the latter was certainly in communication with Leibnitz as early as the year 1673, when he visited England; and, lastly, as both of them saw him in his subsequent visit in 1676, it has been surmised that Leibnitz might thus have either obtained a glimpse of these papers, or some significant hints as to their contents. Now this is precisely the weak point in Leibnitz's case; but we venture to say, that it ought not to weigh against the repeated protestations with which he affirms that he had derived no such advantage; and that he was absolutely ignorant of the name, notation, and nature of Newton's system till some time after 1684, when he published his own first exposition of his Calculus. He repeatedly makes this statement; and, amongst other places, in his correspondence with the Abbé Conti, who was anxious to reconcile the angry disputants. It was precisely this charge against his *honour*, implied in the statement of Dr. Keill, of which Leibnitz most bitterly complains.

One part of the statement just alluded to—vir-

tually adopted in the well-known Report of the Committee of the Royal Society which was appointed to investigate this affair, and which compiled the celebrated collection of papers entitled 'Commercium Epistolicum,'—has always appeared to us not only of little weight, as opposed to the solemn protestations of Leibnitz above mentioned, but as palpably illogical. We are not aware that the peculiar infirmity in the argument to which we now refer, has ever been exposed, and it may therefore justify us in bestowing a few sentences upon it. As the charge of having possibly seen something explicit on the subject in the papers, or in the communications of Newton's friends, was but vague, Keill proceeds to say, that the two well-known letters, which had *certainly* been communicated to Leibnitz through Mr. Oldenburg, contain 'indications of the system of Fluxions, sufficiently intelligible to an acute mind*, from which Leibnitz derived, or at least *might* derive, the principles of his Calculus.'

The first was communicated in June 1676, and the second in October 1676. In the first, Newton gives an expression for the expansion, in series, of binomial powers; as also expressions for the sine in terms of the arc, for the arc in terms of the sine, &c. &c.; but the letter contains not a hint of his method of Fluxions. In the second, elicited by a reply from Leibnitz, which clearly showed that the German mathematician was in the track of the same discoveries, Newton details the manner in which he first arrived at his method of Series—its application, in 1665, to the quadrature of the hyperbola, and the construction of logarithms; and communicates 'many other remarkable things,' to use the words of Montucla. But still results only are given; no hint is afforded of the

* Keill even goes further,—'His indiciis atque his adjutum exemplis, ingenium *vulgare* methodum Newtonianum penitus discerneret.'—*Commercium Epistolicum*, No. 84.

methods by which they are attained. 'The method of Fluxions,' says the late eminent Professor Playfair, 'is not communicated in these letters; nor are the principles of it in any way suggested.' 'Nous remarquons ici,' says Montucla,—in reply to the insinuation that the second letter might have given some light,—'qu'après avoir lu et relu cette lettre, nous y trouvons seulement cette méthode décrite quant à ses effets et ses avantages, mais non quant à ses principes.' Those principles Newton conceals in a couple of anagrams, consisting of the transposed letters of the sentences which express them.

Now we affirm that it was in the highest degree unjust and inconsequential to say that Newton had afforded, in documents thus guarded, 'indications sufficiently intelligible to an acute mind, from which Leibnitz derived, or at least might derive, the principles of his Calculus.' Newton, it is evident, did not think so. His very object was, whether wisely or unwisely, to keep the matter secret; and it is clear that he thought his reserve and his ciphers would effectually secure that purpose. It is really a species of impertinence, scarcely consistent with the reverence due to Newton's sagacity, to say that what *he* thought sufficiently guarded was 'sufficiently intelligible to an acute mind;' and that, while *he* flattered himself that he had rendered the matter sufficiently dark, he had, in the very way in which he proposed the enigma, contrived to solve it!

We may be assured he was far more likely than Keill to judge correctly as to what regarded his secret; nor do we believe there is any one, who will calmly read the letters in question, who will maintain that this great man's sagacity was here at fault. If Leibnitz had really excogitated the Differential Calculus out of such materials as these letters, it would have been scarcely a less illustrious trophy of his genius than the discovery of the Calculus itself; while, if he had been able to make any thing at all of

the hieroglyphical ciphers, he must have had no less than the skill of that philosopher in Laputa, who, as Swift tells us, was employed in extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers. In case, however, any tyro in the mathematics should think that these ciphers may have afforded some more hopeful basis of discovery, we give them below.*

In further confirmation of the claims of Leibnitz to the honour of independent discovery, it may be remarked, that though no candid man can deny the essential identity of the two methods, the very differences of terms and notation indicate that they were arrived at by distinct trains of thought, and that the subject was regarded from different points of view. The idea of the generation of magnitudes by the motion of a point, a line, or a surface, was the conception from which Newton worked; Leibnitz, from the idea of magnitudes, as consisting of infinitely small elements, and admitting increase or diminution by infinitely small increments or decrements. 'Newton and Leibnitz,' says a candid and most competent judge, (Professor De Morgan,) 'had independently come to the consideration of quantity, and each made the new step of connecting his ideas with a specific notation.'

It may seem remarkable that two different men should have made this sublime discovery at the same time; but we must remember, that the necessities of science were simultaneously turning the attention of all the mathematical genius of the age, and even of the preceding one, in the same direction; and that Newton and Leibnitz were both pre-eminently gifted with powers of invention and analysis. Indeed, so far had previous mathematicians paved the way for the solution of the great problem, that we may well

* 1.)—6 a c c d æ 13 e f f 7 i 3 l 9 n 4 o 4 q r r 4 s 9 t 12 v x.

2.)—5 a c c d æ 10 e f f h 12 i 4 l 3 m 10 n 6 o q q r 7 s 11 t 10 v 3 x; 11 a b 3 c d d 10 e æ g 10 i l l 4 m 7 n 6 o 3 p 3 q 6 r 5 s 11 t 7 v x, 3 a c æ 4 e g h 6 i 4 l 4 m 5 n 8 o q 4 r 3 s 6 t 4 v, a a d d æ e e e e i i i m m n n o o p r r r s s s s s t t u u.

say with Professor De Morgan, 'It has, perhaps, not been sufficiently remarked, how nearly several of their predecessors approached the same ground; and it is a question worthy of discussion, whether either Newton or Leibnitz might not have found broader hints in writings accessible to both, than the latter was ever asserted to have received from the former.'*

To conclude merely from the coincidence of their discoveries, that Leibnitz must have stolen from Newton, would be as little reasonable as to suppose that Laplace must have had access to some private sources of information, when, by a very difficult analysis, he proved some of the results which De Moivre had attained, but which, in accordance with the contracted spirit of the age, the latter simply announced, carrying his methods as a secret to the grave with him.

That Leibnitz was capable of making this discovery, is no such extravagant supposition as to render it necessary to resort to a charge of plagiarism. It is not, perhaps, too much to say, that his mathematical talents were equal to any thing. The masterly manner in which he expounded the principles of the Differential Calculus, and developed its applications, even if we were to suppose its first hints borrowed from Newton; his admirable labours on the Integral Calculus; the success with which he entered the lists in those intellectual *jousts*, as they may be called, in which the great mathematicians of the day were wont to engage—the difficult problems he solved, and offered for solution; even his minor achievements—his calculating machine—his binary system of arithmetic—we may add, his juvenile essay 'De Arte Combinatoriâ'—all show the highly inventive character of his genius, and the subtlety and comprehensiveness of his analytical powers.

* Elementary Illustrations of the Differential and Integral Calculus.

If any thing could make us doubt the claims of Leibnitz, it would be a statement of Dr. Guhrauer himself — proving, as it would, if correct, that Leibnitz was capable of trifling with truth. It is well known that, in 1704, a notice appeared, in the 'Acta Eruditorum,' of Newton's Optics. That notice contained a paragraph, which seemed to imply that Newton had been a plagiarist from Leibnitz. The obnoxious sentence, given in all accounts of the controversy, is as follows: — 'Pro differentiis igitur Leibnitianis D. Newtonus adhibet, semperque adhibuit, fluxiones; . . . . . quemadmodum et honoratus Fabrius, in suâ Synopsi Geometricâ motuum progressus Cavallerianæ methodo substituit.'

Newton felt highly indignant at this paragraph, as he well might — even supposing that no charge of plagiarism was intended. Leibnitz constantly affirmed in reply, that it could be interpreted into a charge of plagiarism only by a false and malicious gloss — a gloss which the compilers of the 'Commercium Epistolicum' had not disdained to avail themselves of; that the very words 'adhibet semperque adhibuit' were intended to imply the difference between the case of Newton and that of Fabri, to whose practice alone the word *substituit* applied.

Now, first, Dr. Guhrauer seems to have established the fact, that Leibnitz himself was the author of the obnoxious review — a fact not much to his credit; secondly, he *affirms* that Leibnitz 'constantly denied any knowledge of the authorship.' If this fact were true, we should hardly know what to think of Leibnitz's regard for truth. But, in reality, there nowhere appears, in as far as we have been able to discover, any proof that Leibnitz either denied knowledge of the authorship, or disclaimed the paragraph. He constantly defends the statement it contains, merely denying that it conveyed, or could be intended to convey, a charge of plagiarism.* To the benefit of this

* Dutens' edition of his Works, vol. iii. p. 464, &c.

interpretation we would charitably admit him, since he wishes his words to be so taken; but it is impossible not to suspect that the equivocal sentence was framed with little care as to whether it might not be misunderstood. Indeed, so natural is the interpretation of Newton, and the English mathematicians, that Dr. Guhrauer himself adopts it; declares that Leibnitz vainly strove to explain the sentence away; and that it is a proof, 'von Leibnitzens wahrer eigenster Meinung und Gesinnung gegen Newton.'

'Defend me from my friends,' Leibnitz might well say on this occasion; for if we adopt this interpretation as Leibnitz's true meaning, what are we to think of his shuffling exculpations?

Dr. Guhrauer is not a little indignant with Sir David Brewster, for the supposed injustice which, in his 'Life of Newton,' he has done to Leibnitz, and to which he frequently refers with much bitterness. Never was a complaint more unreasonable. Our distinguished countryman does not question Leibnitz's claim to be regarded as a true inventor of the Calculus; he merely asserts the undoubted *priority* of Newton's discovery. He expressly affirms, that there is no reason to believe Leibnitz a plagiarist; but that if there were any necessity for believing either to be so, it must be Leibnitz, and not Newton, who is open to the charge. Dr. Guhrauer angrily replies, not simply by saying, (which is true,) that there is no sufficient evidence of Leibnitz's having stolen Newton's invention, but by denying the essential identity of the two methods, and by affirming that they are so different as to be considered 'unlike things;'—than which nothing can, in our judgment, be more uncandid.

There is only one statement which, as respects Leibnitz, Dr. Guhrauer could fairly find any fault with, in Sir David Brewster's work; and that is, that Keill had a 'right to express his opinion' that the Letters of Newton, of 1676, gave indications from which Leibnitz 'derived, or might derive,' the prin-

ciples of his Calculus. For reasons already assigned, we do not think that any man had a right to say this; nor that any one could say it, without being of a different opinion from Newton himself, who undoubtedly must have thought that he had not disclosed what he had designed to conceal. With no other statements of Sir David Brewster as regards Leibnitz, are we disposed to find fault. If he has shown any undue partiality in this matter at all, it is not by excessive severity towards Leibnitz, but by undeserved leniency towards Newton; for while he has expressed strong indignation at Leibnitz's charges of plagiarism against Newton, he has very gently touched the virulent reprisals into which Newton was betrayed; who even declared, at last, that Leibnitz's method was but a plagiarism from Barrow—a charge upon which only the very blindness of polemical animosity could have ventured; for it would equally show whence his own Fluxions might have been derived. It exposed him at once to Leibnitz's quiet sarcasm, 'that if any could have profited by Barrow's instructions, it must have been Newton himself.' 'Si quelqu'un a profité de M. Barrow, ce sera plutôt M. Newton, qui a étudié sous lui, que moi; qui, autant que je puis m'en souvenir, n'ai vu les livres de M. Barrow qu'à mon second voyage d'Angleterre.'

As both of these illustrious men could justly claim the honour of the disputed invention, so both, in the conduct of the controversy, in the virulence of expression into which they were hurried, and in their reciprocal charges and accusations, exhibit themselves in much the same sorry light as the Philosopher in 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,' who begins to lecture the rival masters of dancing and fencing out of Seneca, and ends by forgetting that he is a philosopher altogether. The controversy is indeed an instructive spectacle of human infirmity—showing how passion can cloud the serenest intellects, and inflame the most philosophic temperaments; that its thunder-

storms may be found in the highest latitudes, disturbing the frigid poles as well as the burning tropics; that there is no domain of speculation, however remote, or purely abstract, into which it cannot intrude; and that the Mathematician, as well as the Theologian, can exhibit all the rancour of the most vulgar controvertists. There is probably nothing parallel in history, except the controversy, between the Nominalists and Realists, who actually began at last to fight for and against their shadowy universals. Yet it was not till they had first added a religious to the purely speculative element;—which they at last introduced to such an extent, that they charged each other with having committed the sin against the Holy Ghost! Newton and Leibnitz had neither the excuse nor the guilt of this superadded provocation.*

However paradoxical apparently may be the phraseology of Leibnitz, in his first expositions of the Differential Calculus, respecting his infinitesimal quantities, (as, that there are quantities infinitely less than quan-

* One other unjust statement of Dr. Guhrauer's, we cannot pass unnoticed. The unhappy controversy on the Calculus commenced, it is well known, by some slight skirmishes in the year 1699, when Fatio insinuated, that the applause which Leibnitz was receiving for his Differential Calculus (first given to the world by him in 1684), would be more justly bestowed on Newton — its first inventor. Dr. Guhrauer is pleased to intimate that Newton was privy to Fatio's attack, and prompted it. This is most unjust, as it is in express contradiction to Newton's assertion, that he knew nothing of Fatio's intention, and was no party to it. In several other places Dr. G. insinuates, that it is easy to see that Newton was behind the curtain in the early attacks on Leibnitz (vol. i. p. 303), though he did not choose to appear in the controversy himself. Whether it was wise or not in Newton to stand so long aloof — whether it was in sullen pride or real magnanimity — from confidence in his claims, or dislike of controversy — certain it is, that, during all the earlier stages of the dispute, he remained silent; and being so, no man has a right to charge on him, without explicit evidence, the language of his adherents, whose just pride in the reputation of their countryman is quite sufficient to account both for the rashness of their zeal, and the intemperance of their expressions.

tities infinitely little, and that of two quantities infinitely great, one may be infinitely greater than the other,) it is plain that he soon worked his own conceptions completely clear, and gave his abbreviated expressions their true interpretation. The explanations of Leibnitz are, in fact, often so perspicuous, that they ought to have satisfied every objector, and to have prevented the elegant and ingenious nonsense which Bishop Berkeley ventured upon, in regard to them, more than thirty years after, in his 'Analyst. Thus, among many other places, in an explanatory letter to M. Varignon, in 1701, Leibnitz says:—

'Je ne me souviens pas assez des expressions dont je puis m'être servi; mais mon dessein a été de marquer qu'on n'a pas besoin de faire dépendre l'analyse mathématique des controverses métaphysiques, ni d'assurer qu'il y a dans la nature des lignes infiniment petites à la rigueur, en comparaison des nôtres, ni par conséquent qu'il y a des lignes infiniment plus grandes que les nôtres. C'est pourquoi afin d'éviter ces subtilités j'ai crû que pour rendre le raisonnement sensible à tout le monde, il suffisait d'expliquer ici l'infini par l'incomparable, c'est-à-dire, de concevoir des quantités incomparablement plus grandes ou plus petites que les nôtres; ce qui fournit autant qu'on veut de dégrés d'incomparables, puisque ce qui est incomparablement plus petit, entre inutilement en ligne de compte à l'égard de celui qui est incomparablement plus grand que lui. C'est ainsi qu'une parcelle de matière magnétique, qui passe à travers du verre, n'est pas comparable avec un grain de sable, ni ce grain avec le globe de la terre, ni ce globe avec le firmament.'

Dr. Guhrauer is very severe on the 'narrowness of mind' implied in Newton's concealing his Fluxions under ciphers, in his correspondence with Leibnitz; and contrasts it with the frank and manly conduct of the latter, when, in his reply to Newton's second letter, he communicated the principles of his Calculus to his rival. It ought, at all events, to reconcile Dr. Guhrauer to Newton's procedure, that it formed, in fact, the safeguard of Leibnitz's claims; for had Newton disclosed his secret, it would have been impossible to establish them.

We must here conclude, though we could have

wished to add a few observations on several other matters;—on Leibnitz's religious opinions *, and theological controversies, especially with Clarke, Bossuet, and Pelisson,—on his political and diplomatic life, in which, with his accustomed versatility, he seems to have been as much at his ease as in literature and science †,—on the influence he exerted on Letters as the centre of all the literary commerce of the age —an influence which Mr. Stewart has so justly ap-

* Of Leibnitz's reputed adoption of the doctrines of Romanism, we have said nothing. It is certain that if he adopted he never avowed them, nor did he ever join the Romish communion. If the unfinished manuscript, called the 'Systema Theologicum,' (not so entitled by him), really expresses his views, it is, as Dr. Guhrauer observes, 'in opposition to all his other writings, and to his whole life also.' Dr. Guhrauer's remarks on its origin and purport may be found in vol. ii. pp. 32—34. He also treats the whole question of Leibnitz's opinions on this subject very ably in vol. i. pp. 340—358. It is at the same time certain, that Leibnitz's tolerant temper, the eclecticism of his philosophy,—which always invited him to find points of reconciliation in opposing systems, whether those of Aristotle and Descartes, or of Rome and Luther,—his reverence for antiquity, cherished by his profound historical researches—all predisposed him to regard the differences between Romanists and Protestants as far less important than they are. In the attempt to negotiate a reconciliation between them, he expended no small portion of his time and energies; and, in his controversy with Bossuet, he sometimes makes far too liberal concessions for that object.—It is not a little curious, and highly characteristic, that he always flattered himself that he was in possession of a metaphysical solution of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. In this instance, at least, he verified a *naïve* assertion he was accustomed to make respecting himself,—"That to him, unlike the generality of people, all difficult things were easy, and all easy things difficult."

† Of this, a proof rendered more especially remarkable by long subsequent events, is furnished in a Memorial addressed by him to Louis XIV., proposing that memorable plan for keeping some of the chief nations of Europe in check, which Buonaparte afterwards attempted to realise; namely, the *conquest and colonisation of Egypt.* Of this posthumous piece, an English translation was published in London, in 1803, which seems now entirely forgotten.

preciated, and finely illustrated, in his well-known 'Dissertation.' But on all these topics our space compels us to be silent, while on others we gladly content ourselves with referring to the admirable criticisms of the last-mentioned writer, and his other illustrious coadjutors, Sir James Mackintosh and Professor Playfair, in their associated Dissertations on the History of Metaphysical, Ethical, Mathematical, and Physical Science.* In each of these Leibnitz is made, so to speak, to re-enter; for while few other names appear in more than one of them, he is of sufficient importance to be subjected to a fresh examination in all. So various, indeed, are the phases of his character and genius, so numberless his accomplishments, that we may apply to him the well-known lines of Dryden, divested of the satire which was designed in their original application —

> 'A man so various that he seem'd to be
> Not one, but all mankind's epitome.'

* Prefixed to the 'Encyclopædia Britannica.

GENIUS AND WRITINGS OF PASCAL.

So much has been written of late years respecting Pascal, and so much that is worth reading, that we should scarcely have been induced to make him the subject of present criticism, had it not been for the appearance of the remarkable volumes of M. Faugère.

It seems strange to say, that the most popular work of an author who has been dead nearly two hundred years, and who has obtained a world-wide reputation —a work which has passed through numberless editions, and been translated into most European languages—has never been published in an authentic

* 'Edinburgh Review,' Jan. 1847.

1. *Des Pensées de Pascal. Rapport à l'Académie Française sur la nécessité d'une nouvelle édition de cet ouvrage.* Par M. V. Cousin. 8vo. Paris: 1843.

2. *Pensées, Fragments, et Lettres de Blaise Pascal: publiés pour la première fois conformément aux manuscrits originaux, en grande partie inédits.* Par M. Prosper Faugère. 2 vols. 8vo. Paris: 1844.

[This essay has been twice translated into French. The greater part of it first appeared in the 'Revue Britannique,' the conductors of which have conferred a similar honour on several others contained in these volumes. M. Faugère, the editor of the 'Pensées,' having, as he thought, and not unreasonably, ground for complaint at the omission of certain passages, in which his labours had been applauded, published a new translation of the whole. As far as the author is able to judge, it is an admirable specimen of skill and fidelity in the very difficult operation of intellectual transfusion. It may be as well also to mention, that, since the appearance of the present essay, an entirely new translation of nearly the whole of Pascal's writings—all in fact, except his strictly scientific writings—has been published by G. Pearce, Esq.]

form till now. Yet this is strictly true of the 'Pensées' of Pascal.

It is hardly possible to convey to the reader a just idea of the merits of this improved edition, or the circumstances which led to it, without relating some of the more important incidents of Pascal's life. A formal biography, however, it cannot be necessary to give; for who has not read some account of the life of Blaise Pascal? It will be sufficient briefly to advert to the principal facts of this great man's history, and the dates of their occurrence.

He was born at Clermont, in Auvergne, in the year 1623, and died in the year 1662, at the early age of thirty-nine. When we think of the achievements which he crowded into that brief space, and which have made his name famous to all generations, we may well exclaim with Corneille, 'A peine a-t-il vécu, quel nom il a laissé!'

It is well known that Pascal exhibited from the earliest childhood the most precocious proofs of inventive genius, especially in the department of mathematics. Having, if we may believe the universally received tradition, been purposely kept in ignorance of Geometry, lest his propensity in that direction should interfere with the prosecution of other branches of knowledge, his self-prompted genius discovered for itself the elementary truths of the forbidden science. At twelve years of age, he was surprised by his father in the act of demonstrating, on the pavement of an old hall, where he used to play, and by means of a rude diagram traced by a piece of coal, a proposition which corresponded to the thirty-second of the First Book of Euclid.* At the age of sixteen, he composed a little tractate on the Conic Sections, which provoked the mingled incredulity and admiration of Descartes. At nineteen, he invented his cele-

* His sister, Madame Perier, has left an interesting and circumstantial account of this matter.

brated Arithmetical Machine; and at the age of six-and-twenty, he had composed the greater part of his mathematical works, and made those brilliant experiments in Hydrostatics and Pneumatics which have associated his name with those of Torricelli and Boyle, and ranked him amongst the first philosophers of his age. Yet, strange to say, he now suddenly renounced the splendid career to which his genius so unequivocally invited him, and abandoned himself to totally different studies. This was principally attributable to the strong religious impulse imparted to his mind at this period — rendered deeper by early experience in the school of affliction. From the age of eighteen he was a perpetual sufferer. In 1647, when only in his twenty-fourth year, he was attacked by paralysis. His ill health was mainly, if not wholly, occasioned by his devotion to study; and of him it is literally true, that his mind consumed his body.

So complete was his abandonment of science, that he never returned to it but on one memorable occasion, and then only for a short interval. It was when he solved the remarkable problems relating to the curve called the Cycloid. The accounts which have been transmitted to us by his sister, of the manner in which these investigations were suggested and completed — accounts which are authenticated by a letter of his own to Fermat — strongly impress us with the vigour and brilliancy of his genius. We are assured that, after long abandonment of mathematics, his attention was directed to this subject by a casual train of thought suggested in one of the many nights which pain made sleepless. The thoughts thus suddenly originated, his inventive mind rapidly pursued to all the brilliant results in which they terminated; and in the brief space of eight days the investigations were completed. Partly in compliance with the fashion of the age, and partly from the solicitation of his friend the Duke de Roannes, he concealed for a time the discoveries at which he had arrived, and of-

fered the problems for solution to all the mathematicians of Europe, with a first and second prize to successful candidates. If no solution were offered in three months, Pascal promised to publish his own. Several were forwarded, but as none, in the estimation of the judges, completely fulfilled the conditions of the challenge, Pascal redeemed his pledge, under the name of Amos Dettonville,—an anagram of Louis de Montalte, the famous name under which the 'Provincial Letters' had appeared. This was in 1658-9, when he was thirty-six years of age.

With this brief exception, Pascal may be said to have practically abandoned science from the age of twenty-six. Yet he did not at once become a religious recluse. For some years he lived a cheerful and even gay, though never a dissipated life, in Paris, in the centre of literary and polite society, loved and admired by a wide circle of friends, and especially by his patron, the Duke de Roannes. To the accomplished sister of this nobleman, M. Faugère conjectures (as we think plausibly) that Pascal was secretly attached, but, from timidity and humility, 'never told his love.'

In part, probably from the melancholy which this hopeless attachment inspired, but certainly much more in consequence of the deeper religious convictions produced by a memorable escape from an appalling death, in 1654, his indifference to the world increased; and he at length sought for solitude at Port Royal, already endeared to him by the residence there of his sister Jacqueline.

Here it is well known he produced his immortal 'Provincial Letters;' and, when death cut short his brief career, was meditating an extensive work on the fundamental principles of religion,—especially on the existence of God and the evidences of Chistianity,—for the completion of which he required 'ten years of health and leisure.' An outline of the work had been sometimes (and on one occasion somewhat fully) im-

parted in conversation to his friends, but no part of it was ever completed. Nothing was found after his death but detached 'Thoughts' (interspersed with some on other subjects) on the principal topics appropriate to such a work. They were the stones of which the building was to have consisted, many of them unhewn, and some few such as the builder, had he lived, would no doubt have laid aside. The form in which the Thoughts were put together comported but too well with their fragmentary character. It appears that he did not even use a commonplace book; but when, after profound meditation, any thought struck him as worth recording, he hastily noted it on any scrap of paper that came to hand, often on the backs of old letters; these he strung together on a file, or tied up in bundles, and left them till better health and untroubled leisure should permit him to evoke a new creation out of this chaos. It is a wonder, therefore, that the 'Pensées' of Pascal have come down to us at all. Never, surely, was so precious a freight committed to so crazy a bark. The Sybil herself was not more careless about those leaves, *rapidis ludibria ventis*, on which she inscribed her prophetic truths, than was Pascal about those which contained the results of his meditations. Of these results, however, we are in part defrauded, by something far worse than either the fragility of the materials on which they are inscribed, or their utter want of arrangement. Many of the 'Thoughts' are themselves only half developed; others, as given us in the literal copy of M. Faugère, break off in the middle of a sentence, even of a word. Some casual interruption — frequently, no doubt, some paroxysm of pain, to which the great author, in his latter years, was incessantly subject — broke the thread of thought, and left the web imperfect for ever.

It is humiliating to think of the casualties which, possibly in many cases, have robbed posterity of some of the most precious fruits of the meditations of the

wise; perhaps arrested trains of thought which would have expanded into brilliant theories or grand discoveries;—trains which, when the genial moment of inspiration has passed, it has been found impossible to recall; or which, if recalled up to the point at which they were broken off, terminate only in a wall of rock, in which the mountain path, which had been before so clearly seen, exists no longer. It is humiliating to think that a fit of the toothache, or a twinge of the gout, *might* have thus arrested—no more to return—the opening germ of conjecture, which led on to the discovery of the Differential Calculus, or the Theory of Gravitation. The condition of man, in this respect, affords, indeed, one striking proof of that combined 'greatness and misery' of his nature, on which Pascal so profoundly meditated. It is wonderful that a being, such as he, should achieve so much; it is humiliating that he must depend on such casualties for success. On the precarious control which even the greatest men have over their own minds, Pascal himself justly says,—'The mind of this sovereign of the world is not so independent as not to be discomposed by the first *tintamarre* that may be made around him. It does not need the roar of artillery to hinder him from thinking; the creaking of a vane or a pulley will answer the purpose. Be not surprised that he reasons ill just now; a fly is buzzing in his ears—it is amply sufficient to render him incapable of sound deliberation. If you wish him to discover truth, be pleased to chase away that insect who holds his reason in check, and troubles that mighty intellect which governs cities and kingdoms! *Le plaisant dieu que voilà! O ridicolosissimo eroe!*'*

On the imperfect sentences and half-written words, which are now printed in the volumes of M. Faugère,

* Faugère, tom. ii. p. 54. It may be proper to observe, that all our citations from the 'Pensées' are from this new and solely authentic edition.

we look with something like the feelings with which we pore on some half-defaced inscription on an ancient monument — with a strange commixture of curiosity and veneration; and, whilst we wonder what the unfinished sentences may mean, we mourn over the malicious accident which has, perhaps, converted what might have been aphorisms of profoundest importance into a series of incoherent ciphers. One of the last things, assuredly, which we should think of doing with such fragments, would be to attempt to alter them in any way; least of all, to supplement them, and to divine and publish Pascal's meaning. There have been learned men, who have given us supplements to the lost pieces of some ancient historians; — erudite Freinsheimiuses, who hand us a huge bale of indifferent Latin, and beg us only to think it Livy's lost 'Decades.' But what man would venture to supplement Pascal? Only such, it may be supposed, as would feel no scruple in scouring an antique medal, or a worthy successor of those monks who obliterated manuscript pieces of Cicero, that they might inscribe them with some edifying legend.

Alas! more noted people than these were scarcely more scrupulous in the case of Pascal. His friends decided that the fragments which he had left behind him, imperfect as they were, were far too valuable to be consigned to oblivion; and so far all the world will agree with them. If, further, they had selected whatever appeared in any degree coherent, and printed these *verbatim et literatim*, in the best order they could devise, none would have censured, and all would have thanked them. But they did much more than this; or rather, they did both much more and much less. They deemed it not sufficient to give Pascal's Remains with the statement, that they were but fragments; that many of the thoughts were very imperfectly developed; that none of them had had the advantage of the author's revision, — apologies with which the world would have been fully satisfied; but they ven-

tured upon mutilations and alterations of a most unwarrantable description. In innumerable instances, they changed words and phrases; in many others, they left out whole paragraphs, and put a sentence or two of their own in the place of them; they supplemented what they deemed imperfect with an exordium or conclusion, without any indication as to what were the respective ventures in this rare species of literary copartnery. It must have been odd to see this committee of critics sitting in judgment on Pascal's style, and deliberating with what alterations, additions, and expurgations it would be safe to permit the author of the 'Provincial Letters' to appear in public. Arnauld, Nicole, and the Duke de Roannes were certainly no ordinary men; but they were no more capable of divining the thoughts which Pascal had not expressed, or of improving the style where he had expressed them, than of completing a sketch of Raphael.

It appears that, large as was the editorial discretion they assumed, or rather, large as was their want of all discretion, they had contemplated an enterprise still more audacious—nothing less than that of completing the entire work which Pascal had projected, partly out of the materials he had left, and partly from what their own ingenuity might supply. It even appears that they had actually commenced this heterogeneous structure; and an amusing account has been left by M. Perier, both of the progress the builders of this Babel had made, and of the reasons for abandoning the design. 'At last,' says he, 'it was resolved to reject the plan, because it was felt to be *almost* impossible *thoroughly* to enter into the thoughts and plan of the author, and, above all, of an author who was no more; and because it would not have been the work of M. Pascal, but a work altogether different—*un ouvrage tout différent!*' Very different indeed! If this *naïve* expression had been intended for irony, it would have been almost worthy of Pascal himself.

M. Perier also tells us, that if this plan had but been practicable, it would have been the most perfect of all; but he candidly adds, *il était aussi très-difficile de la bien executer.* But though the public was happily spared this fabric of porphyry and common brick, it will not be supposed by any reader of M. Cousin's 'Rapport,' or of M. Faugère's new edition of the 'Pensées,' that Pascal's editors did not allow themselves ample licence. 'En effet,' says the former, 'toutes les infidélités qu'il est possible de concevoir, s'y rencontrent—omissions, suppositions, altérations.' . . . . . 'J'ai donné des échantillons nombreux de tous les genres d'altérations—altérations de mots, altérations de tours, altérations de phrases, suppressions, substitutions, additions, compositions arbitraires et absurdes, tantôt d'un paragraphe, tantôt d'un chapitre entier, à l'aide de phrases et de paragraphes étrangers les uns aux autres, et, qui pis est, décompositions plus arbitraires encore et vraiment inconcevables de chapitres qui, dans le manuscrit de Pascal, se présentaient parfaitement liés dans toutes leurs parties et profondément travaillés.'*

Subsequent editors have taken similar liberties, if not so flagrant. While the original editors left out many passages from fear of the Jesuits, Condorcet, in his edition, omitted many of the most devout sentiments and expressions, under the influence of a very different feeling. Infidelity, as well as superstition, has its bigots, who would be well pleased to have their *index expurgatorius* also.† Unhappy Pascal! Between his old editors and his new, he seemed to be

* Rapport, Avant-Propos, pp. ii. ix.

† 'Condorcet, par un préjugé contraire, supprima les passages empreints d'un sentiment de piété ou d'élévation mystique. . . . Par exemple, on ne retrouve pas, dans l'édition de Condorcet, ces pages ravissantes où Pascal, pénétrant dans les plus hautes régions du spiritualisme Chrétien, caractérise la grandeur de la sainteté et de la charité, comparée à la grandeur de la puissance et à celle de l'esprit.'—FAUGÈRE, *Introduction*, pp. xxviii. xxix.

in the condition of the persecuted bigamist in the fable, whose elder wife would have robbed him of all his black hairs, and his younger of the grey. Under such opposite editing, it is hard to say what might not have disappeared at last.

It had been long felt that no thoroughly trustworthy edition of Pascal's 'Thoughts' had yet been published; that none knew what was precisely his, and what was not. M. Cousin, in the valuable work from which we have just quoted, demonstrated the necessity of a new edition, founded upon a diligent collation of original manuscripts. This task M. Faugère has performed with incredible industry and exactitude, in the two volumes mentioned at the head of the present article. We must refer the reader to his interesting 'Introduction' for the proof of this statement. There he has given the details of his editorial labours. Suffice it to say, that every accessible source of information has been carefully ransacked; every fragment of manuscript, whether in Pascal's own hand, or in that of members of his family, has been diligently examined; and every page offers indications of minute attention, even to the most trivial verbal differences. Speaking of the autograph MS. preserved in the Royal Library at Paris, a folio, into which the original loose leaves are pasted, or, when written on both sides, carefully let into the page—*encadrés*—he says, 'We have read, or rather *studied*, this MS. page by page, line by line, syllable by syllable, from the beginning to the end; and, with the exception of some words which are illegible, it has passed entire into the present edition.' As the public, in the former editions, did not exactly know what was Pascal's and what was not, M. Faugère has been compelled to do what, under other circumstances, it would not have been desirable, and indeed hardly just, to do—what, indeed, any author of reputation would vehemently protest against in his own case. He has been obliged to give every fragment, however imper-

fect, *literatim et verbatim.* The extracts, as we have said, often terminate in the middle of a sentence, sometimes even of a word. As M. Vinet has justly observed in relation to this feature of M. Faugère's labours, Pascal himself would hardly have been satisfied 'with either his old editors or the new.' At the same time, it must be confessed, that, apart from this circumstance, it is deeply interesting to contemplate the first rude forms of profound or brilliant thought, as they presented themselves to the ardent mind of Pascal. This, M. Faugère has often enabled us to do, more especially in the singular collection of the rough notes for the 'Provincial Letters.'* It is like looking at the first sketch of a great painting of Raphael; or, as M. Vinet observes, 'we are taken into the great sculptor's *studio*, and behold him at work, chisel in hand.'

M. Cousin, we should think, must be satisfied with the accuracy and completeness of this edition; and also of the insufficiency of his own argument that Pascal was, in fact, a 'universal sceptic,' who embraced the truths of religion, not as a hypocrite, indeed, but in the exercise of a blind faith—in fact, in a sort of paroxysm of despair; as if he believed, that what he had proved false in physics was still true in morals, 'that nature abhors a *vacuum!*' M. Cousin, in part, founds his theory on the fact, that the first editors had tamed down some of the more startling statements of Pascal, and omitted others; and seems to suppose that a new edition would reveal the sceptic in his full dimensions. He must now, we should think, see his error. There is little or nothing in the old editions, capable of proving Pascal's abiding conviction of the *sufficiency* of the evidence for the fundamental truths of religion, or the divine origin of Christianity, which does not re-appear in the new, and with much new matter to confirm it. To this subject

* Tom. i. p. 293—314.

we shall return, after offering some observations on the genius and character of Pascal.

In one respect, his genius strongly resembled that of a recent subject of our criticism—Leibnitz. His was one of the rare minds, apparently adapted, almost in equal measure, to the successful pursuit of the most diverse departments of philosophy and science —of mathematics. and physics—of metaphysics and criticism. Great as was his versatility, it may be doubted, whether in that respect he did not yield somewhat to Leibnitz, as also in his powers of acquisition, and most assuredly in the extent of his knowledge. It is not, however, to be forgotten, that he died at little more than half the age of the veteran philosopher of Germany; and there can be no doubt that, for his years, his attainments were very extensive. Still it is true, that that perfectly unique characteristic of Leibnitz—his equal aptitude and appetite for reading and thinking, for the accumulation of knowledge and for original speculation—could never have been in the same degree a characteristic of Pascal; and still less in such amazingly diversified directions. Pascal followed in this respect the predominant law of all very inventive minds. He was fonder of thought than of books—of meditation than of acquisition. Even this tendency of mind manifested itself within a more restricted sphere; ample enough, it is true—that of philosophy and theology. To Leibnitz, jurisprudence, history, and antiquities were nearly as familiar as these.

But if the character of Pascal's genius was less excursive than that of Leibnitz, and the literary element in it far less active, these points of inferiority were amply compensated by a superiority in other qualities, in which there can be no comparison between them. In inventiveness, they may perhaps have been equal—but even here, only in mathematics; in moral science—the science of man—we know of nothing out of Bacon,—who may be said to set all com-

parison at defiance,—certainly nothing in Leibnitz, that will bear comparison in depth, subtlety, and comprehensiveness, with some of the 'Thoughts' of Pascal. But, in another characteristic of true genius —and which, for want of another name, we must call *felicity*—neither Leibnitz, nor, it might almost be affirmed, any one else, can, in the full import of the term, be compared with Pascal. Endowed with originality the most active and various, all that he did was with *grace*. Full of depth, subtlety, brilliancy, both his thoughts and the manner in which he expresses them are also full of beauty. His just image is that of the youthful athlete of Greece, in whom was seen the perfection of physical beauty and physical strength; in whom every muscle was developed within the just limits calculated to secure a symmetrical development of all; the largest possible amount of power and flexibility in union.

In all the manifestations of Pascal's mind, this rare felicity is exuberantly displayed;—in the happy methods by which he lighted on truth and pursued scientific discovery; in the selection and arrangement of topics in all his compositions; in the peculiar delicacy of his wit—so strongly contrasted with all the ordinary exhibitions of that quality, with which his coarse age was familiar; and, above all, in that indescribable elegance of expression which uniformly characterises his finished efforts, and often his most negligent utterances, and which even time can do nothing to impair. Let us be permitted to say a word or two further on these topics.

In his scientific writings, the traces of this felicity may be discerned almost equally in the *matter* and the *form*. In relation to the former, there is probably a little illusion practised upon us. In reading his uniformly elegant and perspicuous exposition of his own scientific discoveries, we are apt to underrate the toil and intellectual struggles by which he achieved them. We know that they were, and must have been, at-

tended with much of both—nay, that his shattered health was the penalty of the intensity of his studies. Still, it is hardly possible to read his expositions without having the impression that his discoveries resembled a species of inspiration; and that his mind followed out the first germinant thought to its consequences, with more ease and rapidity than is usually exemplified. We can scarcely imagine it would have been necessary for him to have undergone the frightful toils of Kepler, had he been led into the same track of discoveries. And, in fact, whatever illusion his ease and elegance of manner may produce, we know that, comparatively speaking, his achievements were rapidly completed. It was so with the problems on the Cycloid; it was so with his discoveries in Pneumatics and Hydrostatics. In fact, though his 'Traité de l'Equilibre des Liqueurs,' and the one, 'De la Pesanteur de l'Air,' were not composed till 1653, they seem to have been only another form of the treatise he promised in his 'Nouvelles Expériences touchant le Vide,' published in 1647, and of which that tract was avowedly an abridgment. Indeed, as already said, Pascal had nearly quitted these investigations before the completion of his twenty-sixth year.

There was no scientific subject which Pascal touched in which the felicity of his genius—the promptitude and brilliancy of his mind—did not shine forth. We see these qualities eminently displayed in his 'Traité du Triangle Arithmétique'—in the invention and construction of his Arithmetical Machine—in the mode of solving the problems respecting the Cycloid, in which, while employing Cavalieri's 'Method of Indivisibles,' he proposes to remove the principal objection which had been made to it, by conceptions which bring him within a step of the Fluxions of Newton, and the Calculus of Leibnitz. The same qualities of mind are eminently displayed in the manner in which he establishes the hydrostatic paradox;

and, generally, in the experiments detailed in the 'Nouvelles Expériences,' and the other connected pieces;—most of all in that celebrated *Crucial* experiment on the Puy-de-Dôme, by which he decided the cause of the suspension of the mercury in the barometrical tube. As there are few things recorded in the history of science more happily ingenious than the conception of this experiment, so never was there any thing more pleasantly *naïve* than the manner in which he proposes it, in his letter to M. Perier. 'You doubtless see,' says he, 'that this experiment is decisive of the question; and that if it happen that the mercury shall stand lower at the top than at the bottom of the mountain (as I have many reasons for thinking, although all those who have meditated on this subject are of a contrary opinion), it will necessarily follow, that the weight and pressure of the air are the sole cause of this suspension of the mercury, and not the *horror of a vacuum;* since it is very certain that there is much more air to press at the base than on the summit of the mountain; while, on the other hand, we surely cannot say that nature abhors a vacuum more at the bottom of a mountain than on the top of it!'*

* Descartes claimed the suggestion of this brilliant experiment. All we can say is, that Pascal, who was the very soul of honour, repeatedly declares, that he had meditated this experiment from the very time he had verified Torricelli's, and only waited the opportunity of performing it. On the other hand, Descartes was jealous of the discoveries of others, and, as Leibnitz truly observes, slow to give them all the praise and admiration which were their due. With all his great powers, he had but little magnanimity. It is possible that he may have thought of a similar experiment, and that he may have conferred upon the subject with Pascal; but if the latter speaks truth, it is impossible that he should not already have determined upon it. Indeed, it is hardly probable that, had it been originally a conception of Descartes, he would not have made the experiment for himself, and thus gained the honour undisputed and undivided. —Pascal was, in like manner, accused of having appropriated the honour of Torricelli's experiments. Nothing can be more per-

The usual felicity of his style is seen throughout his philosophical as well as his other works. They appear to us to possess the highest merit which can belong to scientific composition. It is true that, in his purely *mathematical* writings—partly from the defective notation of his age, itself a result of the want of that higher Calculus, the invention of which was reserved for Newton and Leibnitz—he is often compelled to adopt a more prolix style of demonstration than would have been subsequently necessary; but even here, and still more in all the fragments which relate to natural philosophy, his style is in striking contrast with the clumsy expression of the generality of contemporary writers. His Fragments abound in that perspicuous elegance which the French denominate by the expressive word *netteté*. The arrangement of thought and the turn of expression are alike beautiful. Probably no one ever knew so well when to stay his hand.

But it is, of course, in his writings on moral and critical subjects in which we should chiefly expect this felicity to appear; and here we may well say, in the eloquent language of M. Faugère, it is a 'style grand sans exagération, partout rempli d'émotion et contenu, vif sans turbulence, personnel sans pédanterie et sans amour-propre, superbe et modeste tout-ensemble;' or, as he elsewhere expresses it, 'tellement identifié avec l'âme de l'écrivain qu'il n'est que la pensée elle-même, parée de sa chaste nudité comme une statue antique.' By the confession of the first French critics, the 'Lettres Provinciales' did more than any other composition to fix the French language. On this point, the suffrages of all the most

fectly beautiful than the manner in which he vindicates his integrity and candour, in his letter to M. de Ribeyre on this subject. He shows triumphantly, that, in his original 'Nouvelles Expériences,' he had not only not claimed, but had most distinctly disclaimed, all credit for the experiments in question, and had been at much pains to give honour where honour was due.

competent judges—of Voltaire and Bossuet, D'Alembert and Condorcet—are unanimous. 'Not a single word occurs,' says the first, 'partaking of that vicissitude to which living languages are so subject. Here, then, we may fix the epoch when our language may be said to have assumed a settled form.'—'The French language,' says D'Alembert, 'was very far from being formed, as we may judge by the greater part of the works published at that time, and of which it is impossible to endure the reading. In the "Provincial Letters," there is not a single word that has become obsolete; and that book, though written above a century ago, seems as if it had been written but yesterday.' And as these Letters were the first model of French prose, so they still remain the objects of unqualified admiration. The writings of Pascal have, indeed, a paradoxical destiny:—'flourishing in immortal youth,' all that time can do is to superadd to the charms of perpetual beauty the veneration which belongs to age. His style cannot grow old.

When we reflect on the condition of the language when he appeared, this is truly wonderful. It was but partially reclaimed from barbarism—it was still an imperfect instrument of genius. He had no adequate models—he was to create them. Thus to seize a language in its rude state, and compel it, in spite of its hardness and intractability, to become a malleable material of thought, is the exclusive prerogative of the highest species of minds: nothing but the intense fire of genius can fuse these heterogeneous elements, and mould them into forms of beauty. As a proof, it may be remarked, that none but the highest genius *has* ever been equal to this task. Genius of less than the first order will often make improvements in the existing state of a language, and give it a perceptible impulse; but none but the most creative and plastic power can at once mould a rude language into forms which cannot become obsolete;—which remain in perpetuity a part of the current literature,

amidst all the changes of time and the sudden caprices of fashion. Thus it required a Luther to mould the harsh German into the language of his still unrivalled translation of the Scriptures; in which, and in his vernacular compositions, he first fairly reclaimed his native language from its wild state, brought it under the yoke, and subjected it to the purposes of literature. Pascal was in a similar manner the creator of the French. Yet each performed his task in a mode as characteristic, as the materials on which they operated were different. Energy was the predominant quality of Luther's genius; beauty of Pascal's. The rugged German, under the hand of Luther, is compelled to yield to an irresistible application of force; it is the lightning splitting oak and granite. The French, under that of Pascal, assumes forms of beauty by a still and noiseless movement, and as by a sort of enchantment;—it is 'the west wind ungirding the bosom of the earth, and calling forth bud and flower at its bidding.'

It may be thought strange by some that this complete mastery of an unformed language should be represented, not only as so signal a triumph, but as an index of the highest genius. But it will not appear unphilosophical to those who duly consider the subject. If, even when language has reached its full development, we never see the full capacities of this delicate instrument put forth except by great genius, how can we expect it when the language is still imperfect? As used in this rude state, language resembles the harsh music of the Alpine horn, blown by the rude Swiss herd-boy: it is only when the lofty peaks around take it up that it is transmuted by their echoes into exquisite melody.

The severely pure and simple taste which reigns in Pascal's style seems, when we reflect on those vices which more or less infected universal letters, little less than a miraculous felicity. One wonders by what privilege it was that he freed himself from the con-

tagion of universal example, and rose so superior to his age. Taste was yet almost unfelt; each writer affected extravagance of some kind or other;—strained metaphor, quaint conceits, far-fetched turns of thought, unnatural constructions. These were the vices of the day; not so much perhaps in France as in England, but to a great extent in both. From all these blemishes Pascal's style is perfectly free; he anticipated all criticism, and became a law to himself. Some of his observations, however, show that his taste was no mere instinct; they indicate how deeply he had revolved the true principles of composition. His 'thoughts' "sur l'Eloquence et le Style'* are well worth the perusal of every writer and speaker. In one of them he profoundly says, 'The very same sense is materially affected by the words that convey it. The sense receives its dignity from the words, rather than imparts it to them.' In another, he says, 'All the false beauties that we condemn in Cicero have their admirers in crowds.' And, in a third, he admirably depicts the prevailing vice of strained antitheses: 'Those,' says he, 'who frame antitheses by forcing the sense, are like men who make false windows for the sake of symmetry. Their rule is not to speak justly, but to make just figures.' The time spent on his own compositions shows that even such felicity as his could not dispense with that toil, which is an essential condition of all perfect writing—indeed of all human excellence; and affords one other proof of the extreme shallowness of that theory which would have us believe that, to attain success, genius alone is all-sufficient. He is said, when engaged on his 'Lettres Provinciales,' to have sometimes employed twenty days in perfecting a single letter.

Another circumstance which, as already intimated, indicates Pascal's felicity of genius, is the peculiar delicacy and refinement of his *wit*. We say its de-

* Faugère, vol. i. p. 249.

licacy and refinement, for the mere conjunction of great wit with great aptitude for science, cannot be considered as a felicity peculiar to Pascal. It is the *character* of that wit. The conjunction of distinguished wit, in one or other of its many forms, with elevated genius, is far too common to be regarded as a peculiarity of his mind. Paradoxical as the statement may at first sight appear to many who have been accustomed to consider wisdom and wit as dwelling apart, it may be doubted whether there is any one attribute so common to the highest order of mind, whether scientific or imaginative, as some form or other of this quality. The names of Bacon, Shakspeare, Plato, Pascal, Johnson, Byron, Scott, and many more, will instantly occur to the reader. It is true that the history of our species reveals to us minds either really adapted so exclusively to the abstrusest branches of science, or so incessantly immersed in them, that, if they possessed the faculty of wit at all, it was never developed. Aristotle and Newton — though some few sayings of the former which tradition has preserved are not a little racy — may be named as examples. But, in general, — and the whole history of science and literature will show it, — this attribute, in one or other of its thousand varieties, has formed an almost perpetual accompaniment of the finest order of minds. And we may add, that, *à priori*, we should expect it to be so. That same activity of suggestion, and aptitude for detecting resemblances, analogies, and differences, which qualify genius for making discoveries in science, or, under different modifications, for evoking the creations of imagination, may well be supposed not to desert their possessor, when, for playful purposes, and in moments of relaxation, he exercises himself in the detection of the analogies on which wit and humour are founded. Yet, clear as this truth seems to be, and strongly as it is corroborated by the history of genius, the opposite opinion has been, we believe, oftener expressed,

and the highest order of mind pronounced incompatible with such a conjunction.

It is not, then, the activity, but the peculiar delicacy of Pascal's wit, which renders this feature of his genius so truly worthy of admiration;—the more admirable, when it is remembered that the wit of that age, and especially among polemics, so generally took the form of gross scurrility and buffoonery; and, even when it did not sink so low as that, was overgrown with every species of quaintness and affectation. Almost in no instance was it found pure from one or other of these debasements. The wit of Pascal, on the contrary, appears even now exquisitely chaste and natural — attired in a truly Attic simplicity of form and expression. In one quality — that of irony — nothing appears to us to approach it, except what we find in the pages of Plato, between whom and Pascal (different, and even opposite, as they were in many respects) it were easy to trace a resemblance in other points besides the character of their wit. Both possessed surpassing acuteness and subtlety of genius in the department of abstract science — both delighted in exploring the depths of man's moral nature — both gazed enamoured on the ideal forms of moral sublimity and loveliness — both were characterised by eminent beauty of intellect, and both were absolute masters of the art of representing thought — each with exquisite refinement of taste, and all the graces of language. The Grecian, indeed, possessed a far more opulent imagination, and indulged in a more gorgeous style than the Frenchman; or rather, Plato may be said to have been a master of all kinds of style. His dramatic powers, however, in none of his dialogues, can be greater than those which Pascal has displayed in his 'Lettres Provinciales.' Nothing could be apter for the purpose — that of throwing into strong light the monstrous errors of the system he opposed — than the machinery the author has selected. The affected ignorance and *naïveté* of M. Montalte, in quest

of information respecting the theological disputes of the age, and especially the doctrines of the Jesuits — the frankness of the worthy Jesuit father, of whom he seeks instruction, and who, in the boundless admiration of his Order, and the hope of making a convert, details without hesitation, or rather with triumph, the admirable contrivances by which their casuists had, in fact, inverted every principle of morals, and eluded all the obligations of Christianity — the ironical compliments of the supposed novice, intermingled with objections, and slightly expressed doubts, all delivered with an air of modest ingenuousness, which humbly covets further light — the arch simplicity with which he involves the worthy father in the most perplexing dilemmas — the expressions of unsophisticated astonishment, which but prompt his stolid guide eagerly to make good every assertion by a proper array of authorities, — a device which, as Pascal has used it, converts what would have been in other hands only a dull catalogue of citations, into a source of perpetual amusement, — the droll consequences which, with infinite affectation of simplicity, he draws from the Jesuit's doctrines — the logical exigencies into which the latter is thrown in the attempt to obviate them, — all these things managed as only Pascal could have managed them — render the book as amusing as any novel. The form of letters enables him at the same time to intersperse, amidst the conversations they record, the most eloquent and glowing invectives against the doctrines he exposes. Voltaire's well-known panegyric does not exceed the truth — 'That Molière's best comedies do not excel them in wit, nor the compositions of Bossuet in sublimity.' 'This work,' says D'Alembert, 'is so much the more admirable, as Pascal, in composing it, seems to have *theologised* two things which seem not made for the theology of that time — language and pleasantry.'

The success of the work is well known. By his

inimitable pleasantry, Pascal succeeded in making even the dullest matters of scholastic theology and Jesuitical casuistry as attractive to the people as a comedy; and, by his little volume, did more to render the formidable Society the contempt of Europe, than was ever done by all its other enemies put together.

The Jesuits had nothing for it but to inveigh against the letters as 'the immortal liars'—*les menteurs immortelles.* To the charge of having garbled citations, and tampered with evidence in order to produce an unfair impression against the Society, (practices utterly abhorrent from all Pascal's habits of mind and dispositions of heart,) he replies, with the characteristic boldness and frankness of his nature—'I was asked if I repented of having written "Les Provinciales." I reply, that, far from having repented, if I had to write them now, I would write yet more strongly. I was asked why I have given the names of the authors from whom I have taken all the abominable propositions I have cited. I answer, that if I lived in a city where there were a dozen fountains, and that I certainly knew that there was one which was poisoned, I should be obliged to advertise all the world to draw no water from that fountain; and as they might think that it was a pure imagination on my part, I should be obliged to name him who had poisoned it, rather than expose all the city to the danger of being poisoned by it. I was asked why I had employed a pleasant, jocose, and diverting style. I reply, that if I had written in a dogmatical style, it would have been only the learned who would have read, and they would have had no necessity to do it, being at least as well acquainted with the subject as myself: thus, I thought it a duty to write so as to be comprehended by women and men of the world, that they might know the danger of those maxims and propositions which were then universally propagated, and of which they permitted themselves to be so easily persuaded. I was asked, lastly, if I had myself read all

the books I have cited. I answer, No; for in that case it would have been necessary to have passed my life in reading very bad books; but I had read through the whole of Escobar twice, and, for the others, I caused them to be read by my friends. But I have never used a single passage without having myself read it in the book cited, or without having examined the subject on which it is adduced, or without having read both what precedes and what follows it, in order that I might not run the risk of quoting what was, in fact, an objection for a reply to it, — which would have been censurable and unjust.'

The moral aspects of Pascal's character are as inviting as those of his intellect: here, too, he was truly great. Some infirmities, indeed, he had, for he was no more than man: he is nevertheless one of the very few who as passionately pursue the acquisition of moral excellence, as the quest after speculative truth; who, practically as well as theoretically, believe that the highest form of humanity is not intellect, but goodness. Usually it is far otherwise; there is no sort of proportion between the diligence and assiduity which men are ordinarily willing to expend on their own intellectual and moral culture. Even of those who are in a good degree under the influence of moral and religious principles, and whose conduct in all the more important instances of life shows it, how few are there who make that comprehensive rectitude, the obligation of which they acknowledge, and the ideal of which they admire, the *study* of their lives, the rule of their daily actions in little things as well as great; who analyse their motives, or school their hearts, in relation to the habitual expressions of thought and feeling, in conscious obedience to it! Nor is it less than an indication of something wrong about human nature, a symptom of spiritual disease, that of those three distinct orders of 'greatness,' which Pascal has so exquisitely discriminated in his 'Pensées' — power, intellect, and goodness — the ad-

miration inspired by the two first should be so much greater than that inspired by the last. The reverence for genius in particular, often degenerates into a species of idolatry; so much so, as to lead to the proverbial, but most culpable extenuation of grave faults on the part of biographers, who cannot bear to see a spot on the bright luminary they admire! Even if moral excellence be theoretically allowed to claim equal enthusiasm of admiration, it rarely receives it. How vivid, after all, is the sentiment which the intellect of a Bacon or a Shakspeare usually excites in the young and ardent, compared with that with which they regard a Howard or a Martyn. Yet invincible patience, heroic constancy, that honesty of purpose which is proof against all flatteries and all menace, perfect candour, the spirit of unfeigned humility, benevolence, and charity, are surely not less worthy of our most enthusiastic admiration, than those qualities of mind which prompt the discoveries of the philosopher, or inspire the strains of the poet.

It is one of the proofs, according to Paley's ingenious remark, of the originality of the Gospel, and one of the marks of the divinity of its origin, that it chiefly insists on the cultivation of an order of virtues which had been least applauded by man, and in which, as that very fact would indicate, man was most deficient; of humility, meekness, patience, rather than of those opposite virtues to which the active principles of his nature would most readily prompt him, and which have been accordingly the chief objects of culture and admiration. We may extend the remark, and observe, that it is an equal indication of the originality of the Gospel and of the divinity of its origin, that the *ideal* of greatness which it has presented to us, is of a different character from that which has chiefly fixed the enthusiastic gaze of man. It is not one in which power and intellect constitute the predominant qualities, associated with just so much virtue as serves to make the picture free from all

grave reproach; but the perfection of truth, rectitude, and love—to which even the attributes of superhuman power and superhuman wisdom, with which they are blended, are so wonderfully subordinated, that they seem, as they are, intrinsically of inferior lustre. Glorious as is their light, it is absolutely quenched in the brighter effulgence of ineffable and supernal goodness. We think of Cæsar as the great warrior and the great statesman; of Shakspeare as the great poet; of Newton as the great philosopher: when the Christian thinks of his Master, though he *believes* him to be possessed of immeasurably greater power and wisdom than theirs—his first, last thought is, that He is THE GOOD.

The character of *greatness* in Christ, Pascal has beautifully touched. 'The distance between Matter and Mind typifies the infinitely greater distance between Mind and Love. . . . All the *éclat* of external greatness has no lustre for men profoundly engaged in intellectual researches. . . . *Their* greatness, again, is invisible to the noble and the rich. . . . . Great geniuses have their empire, their splendour, their victory, their renown. . . . . These are seen with the eyes of the mind, and that is sufficient. . . . Holy men, again, have *their* empire, *their* victory, and *their* renown. . . . . Archimedes would have been venerable even without rank. He gained no battles; but to the intellectual world he has bequeathed great discoveries. How illustrious does he look in *their* eyes! . . . . In like manner Jesus Christ, without external splendour, without the outward repute of science, is great in his own order of holiness. . . . . It had been idle in Archimedes to have insisted on his royal descent in his books of geometry. And it had been as useless for our Lord Jesus Christ to assume the state of a king for the purpose of giving splendour to his reign of holiness. But he came fully invested with the lustre of his own order.'

Few men have ever dwelt on this ideal of moral

perfection, or sought to realise its image in themselves with more ardour than Pascal,—not always, indeed, as regards the mode, with as much wisdom as ardour. Yet, upon all the great features of his moral character, one dwells with the serenest delight. Much as he is to be admired, he is yet more to be loved. His humility and simplicity, conspicuous as his genius and acquisitions, were those of a very child. The favourite of science—repeatedly crowned, as an old Greek might have said of some distinguished young hero at Olympia, with the fairest laurels of the successful mathematician and the unrivalled polemic—making discoveries even in his youth which would have intoxicated many men even to madness,—neither pride nor vanity found admission to his heart. Philosophy and science produced on him only their proper effect, and taught him—not how much he knew, but how little; not merely what he had attained, but of how much more he was ignorant. His perfect love of truth was beautifully blended with the gentlest charity; and his contempt of fraud and sophistry never made him forget, while indignantly exposing them, the courtesies of the gentleman and the moderation of the Christian: and thus the severest raillery that probably ever fell from human lips, flows on in a stream undiscoloured by one particle of malevolence, and unruffled by one expression of coarseness or bitterness. The transparency and integrity of his character not only shone conspicuous in all the transactions of his life, but seem even now to beam upon us as from an open ingenuous countenance, in the inimitable frankness and clearness of his style. It is impossible to read the passages in his philosophical writings, in which he notices or refutes the calumnies to which he had been exposed—by which it was sometimes sought to defraud him of the honour of the discoveries he had made, and in one instance to cover him with the infamy of appropriating discoveries which had been made by others—

without being convinced of the perfect candour and uprightness of his nature.* His generosity and benevolence were unbounded; so much so, indeed, as to become almost vices by excess; passing far beyond that mean in which the Stagyrite fixes the limits of all virtue. He absolutely beggared himself by his prodigal benefactions; he did what few do—mortgaged even his expectancies to charity. To all which we may add, that he bore the prolonged and excruciating sufferings of his latter years with a patience and fortitude which astonished all who witnessed them.

The failings of Pascal—for to these we must advert—were partly the result of that system of faith in which he had been educated, and which, though he did so much to expose many of the worst enormities which had attached themselves to it, still exercised considerable influence over him. It is lamentable to see such a mind as his surrendering itself to some of the most grievous extravagances of asceticism. Yet the fact cannot be denied; nor is it improbable that his life—brief perhaps at the longest, considering his intense study and his feeble constitution—was yet made more brief by these pernicious practices. We are told, not only that he lived on the plainest fare, and performed the most menial offices for himself; not only that he practised the severest abstinence and the most rigid devotions; but that he wore beneath his clothes a girdle of iron, with sharp points affixed to it; and that, whenever he found his mind disposed to wander from religious subjects, or take delight in things around him, he struck the girdle with his elbow, and forced the sharp points of the iron into his side. We even see but too clearly that his views of life, to a considerable extent, became perverted. He cherished mistrust even of its bless-

* See more particularly his letters to Father Noel, M. le Pailleur, and M. de Ribeyre.

ings, and acted, though he meant it not, as if the very gifts of God were to be received with suspicion —as the smiling tempters to evil, the secret enemies of our well-being. He often expresses himself as though he thought, not only that suffering is necessary to the moral discipline of man, but as though nothing but suffering is at present safe for him. 'I can approve,' he says in one place, 'only of those who seek in tears for happiness.' 'Disease,' he declares in another place, 'is the natural state of Christians.' It is evident that the great and gracious Master, in whose school we all are, and whose various dispensations of goodness and severity are dictated by a wisdom greater than our own, does not think so: if he did, health would be the exception and disease the rule. It is but too true, indeed, that not only is suffering necessary to teach us our feebleness and dependence, and to abate the pride and confidence of our nature, but that we are apt enough to forget, with the return of prosperity, all the wise reflections and purposes which we had made in sorrow. Jeremy Taylor likens us, in one of his many fanciful images, to the fabled lamps in the tomb of Terentia, which 'burned under ground for many ages together,' but which, as soon as ever they were brought into the air and saw a brighter light, went out in darkness. 'So long as we are in the retirements of sorrow, of want, of fear, of sickness, we are burning and shining lamps; but when God lifts us up from the gates of death, and carries us abroad into the open air, to converse with prosperity and temptations, we go out in darkness, and we cannot be preserved in light and heat but by still dwelling in the regions of sorrow.' There is beauty, and, to a certain extent, truth in the figure; but it by no means follows that continuous suffering would be good for man. On the contrary, it would be as remote from producing the perfection of our moral nature as unmitigated prosperity. It would be apt to produce a morbid and ghastly piety;

the 'bright lamps' of which Taylor speaks would still irradiate—only a tomb.

Since the end of suffering, as a moral discipline, is to enable us at last to bear unclouded happiness, what guarantee can we now have of its beneficial effect on us, except by partial experiments of our capacity of recollecting and practising the lessons of adversity in intervals of prosperity? It is true that there is no more perilous ordeal through which man can pass—no greater curse which can be imposed on him, as he is at present constituted—than that of being condemned to walk his life long in the sunlight of unshaded prosperity. His eyes ache with that too untempered brilliance—he is apt to be smitten with a moral *coup de soleil.* But it as little follows that no sunshine is good for us. He who made us, and who tutors us, alone knows what is the exact measure of light and shade, sun and cloud, storm and calm, frost and heat, which will best tend to mature those flowers which are the object of this celestial husbandry; and which, when transplanted into the paradise of God, are to bloom there for ever in amaranthine loveliness. Nor can it be without presumption that we essay to interfere with these processes; our highest wisdom is to fall in with them. And certain it is that every man will find by experience that he has enough to do, to bear with patience and fortitude the *real* afflictions with which God may visit him, without venturing to fill up the intervals in which He has left him ease, and even invites him to gladness, by a self-imposed and artificial sorrow. Nay, if his mind be well constituted, he will feel that the learning how to apply, in hours of happiness, the truths which he has pondered in the school of sorrow, is not one of the least difficult lessons which sorrow has to teach him; not to mention that the grateful reception of God's gifts, is as true a part of duty—and even a more neglected part of it—than a patient submission to his chastisements.

It is at our peril, then, that we seek to interfere with the discipline which is provided for us. He who acts as if God had mistaken the proportions in which prosperity and adversity should be allotted to us, who seeks by hair-shirts, prolonged abstinence, and self-imposed penance, to render more perfect the discipline of suffering, only enfeebles, instead of invigorating, his piety; and resembles one of those hypochondriacal patients — the plague and torment of physicians — who having sought advice, and being supposed to follow it, are found not only taking their physician's well-judged prescriptions, but secretly dosing themselves in the intervals with some quackish nostrum. Thus it was even with a Pascal — and we cannot see that the experiment was attended in his case with any better effects.

It is indeed pitiable to read, that during his last days his perverted notions induced him to refrain from the natural expressions of fondness and gratitude towards his sisters and attendants, lest that affection with which they regarded him should become inordinate; lest they should transfer to an earthly creature the affection due only to the Supreme. Something like an attempted justification of such conduct, indeed, occurs in his 'Pensées.' 'Il est injuste qu'on s'attache à moi, quoiqu'on le fasse avec plaisir et volontairement. Je tromperais ceux à qui j'en ferais naître le désir; car je ne suis la fin de personne, et n'ai pas de quoi les satisfaire. Ne suis-je pas prêt à mourir? Et ainsi l'objet de leur attachment mourra donc. Comme je serais coupable de faire croire une fausseté, quoique je la persuadasse doucement et qu'on la crût avec plaisir, et qu'en cela on me fît plaisir; de même je suis coupable de me faire aimer.'* Madame Perier has cited this passage in the life of her brother, as accounting for his apparent coldness to herself.†

* Tom. i. p. 198.

† The passage of Madame Perier is deeply affecting. 'Meanwhile, as I was wholly a stranger to his sentiments on this point,

It is wonderful that a mind so powerful should have been misled by a pernicious asceticism to adopt such maxims; it is still more wonderful that a heart so fond should have been able to act upon them. To restrain, even in his dying hours, expressions of tenderness towards those whom he so loved, and who so loved him — to simulate a coldness which his feelings belied — to repress the sensibilities of a grateful and confiding nature — to inflict a pang by affected indifference on hearts as fond as his own, — here was indeed a proof of the truth upon which he so passionately meditated, the 'greatness and the misery' of man, of his strength and his weakness; — weakness in supposing that such perversion of all nature could ever be a dictate of duty — strength in performing, without wincing, a task so hard. The American Indian bearing unmoved the torture of his enemies, exhibits not, we may rest assured, greater fortitude than Pascal, when, with such a heart as his, he received in silence the last ministrations of his devoted friends, and even declined, with cold and averted eye, the assiduities of their zealous love.

That same melancholy temperament which, united with a pernicious asceticism, made him avert his gaze even from innocent pleasures, and suspect a serpent lurking in every form of pleasure, also gave to his *representations* of the depravity of our nature an undue intensity and Rembrandt-like depth of colouring. His mode of expression is often such, that were it not for what we otherwise know of his character, it might almost be mistaken for an indication of

I was quite surprised and discouraged at the rebuffs he would give me upon certain occasions. I told my sister of it, and not without complaining that my brother was unkind, and did not love me; and that it looked to me as if I put him in pain, even at the very moment I was studying to please him, and striving to perform the most affectionate offices for him in his illness.'— *Madame Perier's Memoirs of Pascal.*

misanthropy. With this vice, accordingly, Voltaire does not hesitate to tax him.

'Ce fameux écrivain, misanthrope sublime.'

Nothing can be more unjust. As to the *substance* of what Pascal has said of human frailty and infirmity, most of it is at once verified by the appeal to individual consciousness; and as to the *manner*, we are not to forget that he every where dwells as much upon the 'greatness,' as upon the 'misery' of man. 'It is the ruined archangel,' says Hallam, with equal justness and beauty, 'that Pascal delights to paint.' It is equally evident that he is habitually inspired by a desire to lead man to truth and happiness; nor is there any thing more affecting than the passage with which he closes one of his expostulations with infidelity, and which M. Cousin finely characterises as 'une citation glorieuse à Pascal.' 'This argument, you say, delights me. If this argument pleases you, and appears strong, know that it proceeds from one, who, both before and after it, fell on his knees before that Infinite and Invisible Being to whom he has subjected his whole soul, to pray that He would also subject *you* to Himself for your good and for His glory; and that thus omnipotence might give efficacy to his feebleness.'

In addition to this, it must be said, that in his most bitter reflections, this truly humble man is thinking as much of himself as of others, and regards Blaise Pascal as but a type of the race whose degeneracy he mourns. His most bitter sarcasms often terminate with a special application to the writer. Thus he says, 'Vanity is so rooted in the heart of man, that a common soldier, a scullion, will boast of himself, and will have his admirers. It is the same with the philosophers. Those who write would fain have the fame of having written well; and those who read it, would have the glory of having read it; *and I, who*

am writing, probably feel the same desire, and not less those who shall read it.'

It is true, indeed, that some of his reflections are as caustic and bitter as those of Rochefoucauld himself. For example—'Curiosity is but vanity. Often we wish to know more, only that we may talk of it. People would never traverse the sea if they were never to speak of it,—for the mere pleasure of seeing, without the hope of ever telling what they have seen.'

And again, 'Man is so constituted, that, by merely telling him he is a fool, he will at length believe it; and if he tells himself so, he will constrain himself to believe it. For man holds an internal intercourse with himself, which ought to be well regulated, since even here "Evil communications corrupt good manners."'

It may not be without amusement, perhaps instruction, to cite one or two other specimens of this shrewd and caustic humour.

'Certain authors, speaking of their works, say, "My book, my commentary, my history." It were better to say, "Our book, our history, our commentary;" for generally there is more in it belonging to others than to themselves.'

'I lay it down as a fact, that if all men knew what they say of one another, there would not be four friends in the world. This appears by the quarrels which are sometimes caused by indiscreet reports.'

Still, as it is the motive which gives complexion to all our moral actions, so Pascal's bitter wisdom, or even his unjust satire, is something very different from misanthropy. Byron found an apology for his Cain in Milton's delineation of Satan; but few beside himself could ever see its force. With as little reason could a Timon plead the example of a Pascal. Those who cannot see a deep benevolence in all that he wrote respecting our corrupted nature, must indeed be blind. It is with no demoniacal chuckle, no smile of malicious triumph, that he publishes the results of

his researches into the depths of man's moral nature. On the contrary, it is with profoundest pity. He gazes on the noble ruins of humanity as on those of some magnificent temple, and longs to see the fallen columns and the defaced sculpture restored. With what noble eloquence—with what deep sympathy with humanity—does he rebuke the levity of those infidels who tell us, as if it were matter of triumph, that we are 'the inhabitants of a fatherless and forsaken world;' and who talk as if their vaunted demonstration of the vanity of our immortal hopes gave them a peculiar title to our gratitude and admiration!—'What advantage is it to us to hear a man saying that he has thrown off the yoke; that he does not think there is any God who watches over his actions; that he considers himself as the sole judge of his conduct, and that he is accountable to none but himself? Does he imagine that we shall hereafter repose special confidence in him, and expect from him consolation, advice, succour in the exigencies of life? Do such men imagine that it is any matter of delight to us to hear that they hold that our soul is but a little vapour or smoke, and that they can tell us this in an assured and self-sufficient tone of voice? Is this, then, a thing to say with gaiety? Is it not rather a thing to be said with tears, as the saddest thing in the world?'

On the whole, in contemplating the richly diversified characteristics of this exalted genius in its different moods and phases—the combination of sublimity and depth with lightness and grace—of the noblest aptitudes for abstract speculation with the utmost delicacy of taste and sensibility of feeling—of profound melancholy with the happiest and most refined humour and raillery—the grandeur of many aspects of his character, and the loveliness of others, we seem to be reminded of the contradictory features of Alpine scenery, where all forms of sublimity and beauty, of loveliness and terror, are found in singular proximity; where upland valleys of exquisite verdure

and softness lie at the foot of the eternal glaciers; where spots of purest pastoral repose and beauty, smile under the very shadow of huge snowy peaks, and form the entrance of those savage gorges in which reigns perpetual, but sublime desolation; where the silence is broken only by the roar of the distant cataract, and the lonely thunder of the avalanche.

We must now make some remarks on the projected treatise, of which the 'Pensées' were designed to form the rude materials.

It is impossible to determine, from the undeveloped character of these 'Thoughts,' the precise form of the work; all we are told is, that it was to have treated of the primary truths of all religion, and of the evidences of Christianity. It is clear, that about half the 'Thoughts' which relate to theology at all, have reference to the former. In Pascal's time, however, both subjects might have been naturally included in one work. The great deistical controversies of Europe had not yet commenced, and there had been little reason to discriminate very nicely the limits of the two investigations. Pascal himself could hardly have anticipated the diversified forms which the subject of the evidences of Christianity alone would assume — so diversified, indeed, that they are probably insusceptible from their variety (external and internal) of being fully exhibited by one mind, or, consequently, in one volume. The evidences of Christianity almost form a science of themselves.

Fragmentary as the 'Pensées' are, it is easy to see, both from their general tenor, and from the character of the author's mind, where the principal strength of such a work would lie. His proofs of the truths of natural religion would have been drawn from within, rather than from without; and his proofs of the truths of Christianity from its internal rather than external evidences; — including in this term 'internal,' not only the adaptation of the doctrines revealed to the

moral nature of man, but whatsoever indications the fabric of Scripture itself may afford of the divinity of its origin.

It is evident that he had revolved all these topics profoundly. None had explored more diligently the abyss of man's moral nature, or mused more deeply on the 'greatness and misery of man'—or on the 'contrarieties' which characterise him—or on the remedies for his infirmities and corruptions. And there are few, even since his time, who seem to have appreciated more fully the evidences of Christianity arising from indications of truth in the genius, structure, and style of the Scriptures; or from the difficulties, not to say impossibilities, of supposing *such* a fiction as Christianity the probable product of any human artifice, much less of such an age, country, and, above all, such men as the problem limits us to. In one passage, he gives expression to a thought which has been expanded into the beautiful and eminently original work of Paley, entitled 'Horæ Paulinæ.' He says, 'The style of the Gospel is admirable in many respects, and, amongst others, in this—that there is not a single invective against the murderers and enemies of Jesus Christ. . . . . If the modesty of the evangelical historians had been affected, and, in common with so many other traits of so beautiful a character, had been affected only that they might be observed, then, if they had not ventured to advert to it themselves, they would not have failed to get their friends to remark on it, to their advantage. But as they acted in this way without affectation, and from a principle altogether disinterested, they never provided any one to make such a criticism. *And, in my judgment, there are many points of this kind which have never been noticed hitherto;* and this testifies to the simplicity with which the thing was done.'*

* Tom. ii. p. 370.

He has also, with characteristic comprehensiveness, condensed into a single paragraph the substance of the celebrated volume of 'Bampton Lectures,' on the contrasts between Mahometanism and Christianity. 'Mahomet founded his system on slaughter; Jesus Christ by exposing his disciples to death; Mahomet by forbidding to read; the Apostles by commanding it. In a word, so opposite is the plan of one from that of the other, that if Mahomet took the way to succeed according to human calculation, Jesus Christ certainly took the way to fail; and instead of arguing that since Mahomet succeeded, Jesus Christ might also succeed, we ought rather to say, that since Mahomet succeeded, it is impossible but that Jesus Christ should fail.'*

On the subject of the External Evidences, we doubt whether he would have been equally successful,—partly because the spirit of accurate historic investigation had not yet been developed, and partly from the character of his own mind. On the subject of Miracles, too, he scarcely seems to have worked his conceptions clear; and, in relation to that of Prophecy, he was evidently often inclined to lay undue stress on analogies between events recorded in the Old Testament and others recorded in the New, where Scripture itself is silent as to any connexion between them;—analogies in one or two cases as fanciful as any of those in which the Fathers saw so many types and prefigurations of undeveloped truths. This disposition to forget the limits between the analogies which may form the foundation of a logical argument, and those which, after all, can yield only poetical illustrations, has too often obtruded itself even into the domain of physical science; and is one from which the most philosophic minds, if they have much imaginativeness, are by no means exempt. Even Bacon, in several instances, has been the dupe

* Tom. ii. p. 337.

of this delusion — one of the *idola tribus* which he was so anxious to expose.

There is one subject on which, after reading the 'Pensées,' one would fain have seen a treatise from the hand of Pascal. If he had enjoyed leisure, health, and an unclouded mind, there is probably no man who could have written more profoundly or more wisely on the *Prima Philosophia* — the first principles of all knowledge — the limits within which man can hopefully speculate — and the condition and principles of belief. On all these subjects he had reflected much and deeply. His remarks on the position of man between 'the two infinitudes,' which he has so finely illustrated — on the Dogmatists and Pyrrhonists — on the influence of the affections and passions on the understanding — and his observations entitled, 'De l'Art de Persuader' and 'De l'Esprit Géométrique' — all show how deeply he had revolved the principal topics of such a work.

We have already alluded to the charge preferred against Pascal by M. Cousin, of no less than universal and hopeless scepticism; — from which, as is said, he took refuge in faith by a blind effort of will, without evidence, and in utter despair of obtaining it. One or two brief citations will show the extent to which this charge is pushed. 'Ce dessein [des 'Pensées'] je l'ai démontré dans ce Rapport, était *d'accabler la philosophie Cartésienne, et avec elle toute philosophie, sous le scepticisme,* pour ne laisser à la foi naturelle de l'homme d'autre asîle que la religion. Or en cela, l'adversaire des Jesuites en devient, sans s'en douter, le serviteur et le soldat.'* — 'Lui aussi, il a pour principe que *le Pyrrhonisme est le vrai.*' — 'Il est sceptique, et, comme Huet, il se propose de conduire l'homme à la foi par la route du scepticisme.'† M. Cousin even goes the length of saying that Pascal's religion 'was not the solid and pleasant fruit which springs from

* Rapport, p. xiii. xviii. † Ibid. p. xix.

the union of reason and feeling—*de la raison et du cœur*—in a soul well constituted and wisely cultivated; it is a bitter fruit, reared in a region desolated by doubt, under the arid breath of despair.'* He also tells us, that 'the very depth of Pascal's soul was a universal scepticism, from which he could find no refuge except in a voluntarily blind credulity.' '*Le fond même de l'âme de Pascal est un scepticisme universel, contre lequel il ne trouve d'asile que dans une foi volontairement aveugle.*'

These are certainly charges which, without the gravest and most decisive proof, ought not to be preferred against any man; much less against one possessing so clear and powerful an intellect as Pascal. It is, in fact, the most degrading picture which can be presented of any mind; for what weakness can be more pitiable, or what inconsistency more gross, than that of a man who, by a mere act of will—if, indeed, such a condition of mind be conceivable—surrenders himself to the belief of the most stupendous doctrines, while he at the same time acknowledges that he has no proof whatever of their certainty?

We have great respect for M. Cousin as a philosopher and historian of philosophy, and we willingly render him the homage of our thanks for his liberal and enlightened survey of the intellectual philosophy of Scotland; but he must excuse us for dissenting from, and freely examining, his startling view of the scepticism of Pascal. That charge we do not hesitate to pronounce unjust, for the following reasons:—

1. It appears to us that M. Cousin has forgotten that Pascal by no means denies that there is sufficient evidence of the many great principles to which scepticism objects; he only maintains that we do not arrive at them by *demonstration*. He has powerfully vindicated the certainty of those intuitive principles which are not ascertained by reasoning, but are pre-

* Rapport, p. 162.

supposed in every exercise of reasoning. Let us hear him: 'The only strong point,' says he, 'of the Dogmatists is, that we cannot consistently with honesty and sincerity doubt our own intuitive principles. . . . We know the truth, not only by reasoning, but by feeling, and by a vivid and luminous power of direct comprehension; and it is by this last faculty that we discern first principles. It is vain for reasoning, which has no share in discovering these principles, to attempt subverting them. . . . The Pyrrhonists who attempt this must try in vain. . . . The knowledge of first principles, as the ideas of space, time, motion, number, matter, is as unequivocally certain as any that reasoning imparts. And, after all, it is on the perceptions of feeling and common sense, that reason must at last sustain itself, and base its argument. . . . Principles are perceived, propositions are deduced: each part of the process is certain, though in different modes. And it is as ridiculous that reason should require of feeling and perception, proofs of these first principles before she assents to them, as it would be that perception should require from reason an intuitive impression of all the propositions at which *she* arrives. This weakness, therefore, ought only to humble that reason which would constitute herself the judge of all things, but not to invalidate the convictions of common sense, as if reason * only could be our guide and teacher.' Can he who thus speaks be a 'universal sceptic,' when it is the peculiar characteristic of Pyrrhonism — that is, universal scepticism — to controvert the certainty of principles perceived by intuition, and to plume itself upon having successfully done this, when it has shown that they cannot be demonstrated by reasoning?

But let us hear him still more expressly on the

* It is true that, in these and many similar passages, Pascal, as M. Cousin rightly observes, often employs the word *reason* as if it were synonymous with *reasoning*. But this only respects the *propriety* of his expressions; his *meaning* is surely tolerably clear.

subject of Pyrrhonism. 'Here, then, is open war proclaimed amongst men. Each must take a side; must necessarily range himself with the Pyrrhonists or the Dogmatists; for he who would think to remain neuter is a Pyrrhonist *par excellence.* He who is not against them is for them. What, then, must a person do in this alternative? Shall he doubt of every thing? Shall he doubt that he is awake, or that he is pinched or burned? Shall he doubt that he doubts? Shall he doubt that he is? We cannot get so far as this; and I hold it to be a fact, that there never has been an absolute and perfect Pyrrhonist.' M. Cousin must suppose Pascal to have made an exception in favour of himself, if it be indeed true that he was an 'universal sceptic.'

2. It does not appear to us that M. Cousin has sufficiently reflected, that in those cases in which conclusions truly involve processes of reasoning, Pascal would not deny that the preponderance of proof rested with the truths he believed, though he denied the *demonstrative* nature of that proof. And he applies this with perfect fairness to the evidences of Christianity, as well as to the truths of natural theology. It may well be, that minds so differently constituted as those of Pascal and Cousin may form different conclusions as to the *degree* of success which may attend the efforts of human reasoning; but a man is not to be straightway branded with the name of a universal sceptic, because he believes that there are very few subjects on which evidence can be said to be demonstrative. The more deeply a man reflects, the fewer will he think the subjects on which this species of certainty can be obtained; and the study neither of ancient nor of modern philosophy, will convince him that he is far wrong in this conclusion. But he will not, for all that, deny that there is sufficient evidence on all the more important subjects to form the belief and determine the conduct of man — evidence of precisely the same nature with that which *does* form the

one, and *does* determine the other, in all the ordinary affairs of life. And this alone, where a man rejects such evidence, is sufficient to condemn him; for what right has he to decline, in the more important instances, a species and degree of evidence which he never hesitates to *act* upon in all other cases?

Now, that Pascal believed that there was sufficient evidence of this character, for all the fundamental truths of religion, is manifest from many express declarations. 'There is light enough,' says he, 'for those whose sincere wish is to see; and darkness enough to confound those of an opposite disposition.'* Of Christianity he says,—'It is impossible to see all the proofs of this religion combined in one view, without feeling that they have a force which no reasonable man can withstand.'† 'The proofs of our religion are not of that kind that we can say they are *geometrically convincing*. . . . But their light is such that it outshines, or at the least equals, the strongest presumption to the contrary: so much so, that *sound reason* never can determine not to accept the evidence, and probably it is only the corruption and depravity of the heart that do.' It is not without reason that M. Faugère says, in reference to the charge of scepticism urged against Pascal, 'Faith and reason may equally claim him. If they sometimes appear to clash in his mind, it is because he wanted time not only to finish the work on which he was engaged, but even to complete that internal revision—*son œuvre intérieure*—which is a kind of second creation of genius; and to melt into one harmonious whole the diverse elements of his thoughts. . . . Amongst the inedited fragments of Pascal, we find these remarkable lines, "Il faut avoir ces trois qualités; Pyrrhonien, géomètre, Chrétien soumis; *et elles s'accordent et se tempèrent en doutant où il faut, en assurant où il faut, en se soummettant où il faut.*" These bold

* Tom. ii. p. 151. † Tom. ii. p. 365.

words comprise the entire history of Pascal, and express in brief the state of his mind.'*

3. While we admit that the severely geometrical cast of Pascal's mind, as well as his gloomy temperament, have led him at times into extravagant expressions on this subject, so accomplished a critic as M. Cousin needs not be told, that it is not fair to take such expressions alone, and in their utmost strictness, if they can be confronted with others which modify or explain them. The former, in common candour, are to be interpreted only in connexion with the latter. This is the course we always pursue in interpreting the language of writers who have indulged in unlimited propositions; and if it be found even impossible to harmonise certain expressions — if they be absolutely contradictory — all we feel at liberty to do is to affirm the inconsistency of the writer; not to assume that he meant *all* that could possibly be implied in the one class of expressions, and *nothing* by the other. We know it is so natural for an author of much imagination or sensibility to give an inordinately strong expression to a present thought or feeling, and to forget the judge in the advocate, that he must be taken in another mood, or rather in several, if we wish to ascertain the *true mean* of his sentiments. Pascal has in one of his 'Pensées' indicated this only reasonable method of procedure.

Now, M. Cousin is surely aware of the fact, that the expressions to which he has given such an unfavourable interpretation, may be easily confronted with others of a different tendency. He himself, indeed, proclaims it. He even says, no man ever contradicted himself more than Pascal. '*Jamais homme ne s'est plus contredit.*' 'Confounding,' says he, 'reasoning and reason, forgetting that he has himself judiciously discriminated primary and indemonstrable truths, discovered to us by that spontaneous intuition

* Tom. i. p. lxxvii. Introduction.

of reason, which we also with him call instinct, sentiment, feeling, — from truths which are deduced from them by the method of reasoning, or which we draw from experience by induction; — forgetting that he has thus himself replied beforehand to all the attacks of scepticism, Pascal demands all these principles from experience and reasoning, and by that means, without much trouble, confounds them all.' * Now, we do not stay to inquire here into the justness of the latter part of this representation; but we simply ask, why should all 'the replies' which, as our author admits, 'Pascal has *himself* made to scepticism,' go for nothing, and only the sentences in which he appears to favour it be remembered; and not only remembered, but taken as the sole exponents of his opinions? Surely a sceptic might as well take the opposite side, and say, 'Alas! after Pascal seems in many expressions to have conceded much to scepticism, he forgets all he had said; and shows, by his whole talk of "intuitive truths," and "sentiment," and "feeling," that he is no better than a dogmatist. Might we not say to the two objectors, 'Worthy friends! you are the two knights in the fable; — one is looking on the golden, and the other on the silver side of the same shield.'

4. Nor is it to be forgotten, that while such a mode of interpretation as that of M. Cousin would hardly be just in the case of any work of any author, it is especially unfair to apply it to such a work, or rather mere materials of a work, as the 'Pensées.' They were, we are to recollect, mere notes for Pascal's own use, and were never intended to be published as they are. Many of them are altogether imperfect and undeveloped; some scarcely intelligible. It is impossible to tell with what modifications, and in what connexion, they would have stood in the matured form which the master-mind, here hastily re-

* Rapport, p. 157.

cording them for private reference, would have ultimately given them. Nay, there can scarcely be a doubt, that many of them were mere objections which Pascal noted for refutation — not opinions to be maintained by him; and this in many places may be not obscurely inferred. Some, again, are mere quotations from Montaigne and other authors, extracted for some unknown purpose, but not distinguished in these private memoranda from the writer's own expressions; so that the first editors of the 'Pensées' actually printed them in some cases as his. And lastly, some were dictated, in moments of sickness and pain, to an old domestic, who has scrawled them in a fashion which sufficiently shows that it is very possible that some errors may lie with the amanuensis.* Yet M. Cousin, while straining every expression on which he founds his charge of scepticism, to its utmost strictness of literal meaning, never seems to have adverted to one of these very reasonable considerations.

5. The weight which any deliberate opinion of M. Cousin must reasonably possess, may in this case well be confronted with that of Bayle; whose notorious scepticism would have been but too glad to find an ally in so admired a genius as Pascal, had there been any plausible pretext on which to claim him. Yet that subtle and acute critic declares, that Pascal knew perfectly well what to render to faith, and what to reason.

6. In our judgment, Pascal's projected work is itself a sufficient confutation of M. Cousin's supposition. For, did ever man before meditate an elaborate work on the 'evidences' of truths for which he believed no evidence but a blind faith could be given?

* Of one of these expressions, on which M. Cousin has founded much, M. Faugère says, 'Tout ce morceau, dicté à une personne visiblement fort peu lettrée, présente çà et là des obscurités qui viennent sans doute de l'inexpérience du secrétaire.'—Tom. ii. p. 114

7. We maintain, lastly, that even if it be proved (which is, doubtless, very true) that Pascal, at different periods and in different moods of mind, formed varying estimates of the evidence on behalf of the great truths in which he was so sincere a believer; or even (which may possibly be true) that for transient intervals he doubted the conclusiveness of that evidence altogether, these variations would be far from justifying a charge of 'universal and habitual scepticism;'—such momentary differences of thought and mood having been notoriously experienced by almost all great minds. With some remarks on this subject, which may possibly be serviceable to minds peculiarly liable to attacks of scepticism, and calculated to teach all of us charity in judging of others, we shall close the present essay.

First, then, it by no means appears that a momentary invasion of doubt, or even of scepticism, is inconsistent with a *prevailing* and *habitual* faith, founded on an intelligent conviction of a preponderance of reasons to justify it; though those reasons may be felt to fall far short of absolute demonstration. There may be a profound impression that the reasons which sustain habitual belief in any truth established only on moral evidence, or on a calculation of probabilities, are so varied and powerful—so vast in their sum—as to leave, in ordinary moods of mind, no doubt as to the conclusions to which they point, and the practical course of conduct which alone they can justify. And yet it is quite true, that from the infirmities of our nature—from the momentary strength which the most casual circumstances may give to opposing objections—from the depressing influence of sorrow—of a trivial indisposition—of a transient fit of melancholy—of impaired digestion—even of a variation of the weather, (for on all these humiliating conditions does the boasted soundness of human reason depend)—a man shall for an hour or a day really doubt of that of which he never doubted

yesterday, and of which he would be ashamed to doubt to-morrow. And especially is this the case in those who, like Pascal, possess exquisite sensibility, or are liable to fits of profound depression. As they look upon truth through the medium of cheerful or gloomy feelings, truth herself varies like a landscape, as seen in a bright sunshine or on a cloudy day. Pascal himself, in those reveries in which he loved to indulge on the mingled 'greatness and misery of man,' has frequently depicted the dependence of the most powerful mind, even in the bare exercise of its exalted faculties, on the most insignificant circumstances. We have cited, in the early part of this article, one striking passage to this effect. In another place he says, 'Place the greatest philosopher in the world on a plank, wider than is absolutely necessary for safety, and yet, if there is a precipice below him, though reason may convince him of his security, his imagination will prevail. There are many who could not even bear the thought of it without paleness and agitation.'* Another very powerful representation, to the same effect, may be found on the same page, where, after describing a 'venerable judge,' who may seem 'under the control of a pure and dignified wisdom,' and enumerating several petty trials 'of his exemplary gravity,' Pascal declares, that, let any one of these befall him, 'and he will engage for the loss of the judge's self-possession.'

Nor are the causes which disturb the exercise of the reason merely physical: moral causes are yet more powerful; as we wish, hope, fear, humiliating as the fact is, so do we proceed to judge of evidence. Reason, that vaunted guide of life, nowhere exists as a pure and colourless light, but is perpetually tinctured by the medium through which it passes; it flows in upon us through painted windows. And thus it is, that perhaps scarcely once in ten thousand times,

* Tom. ii. p. 49.

probably never, does man deliver a judgment on evidence simply and absolutely judicial. 'The heart,' says Pascal, with great truth, 'has its reasons, which reason cannot apprehend.' 'The will,' says he, in another place, 'is one of the principal instruments of belief; not that it creates belief, but because things are true or false according to the aspect in which we regard them. The will which is more inclined to one thing than another, turns away the mind from the consideration of those things which it loves not to contemplate; and thus the mind, moving with the will, stops to observe that which it approves, and forms its judgment by what it sees.'

Most emphatically is this the case, where the moral state is habitually opposed to the conclusions to which the preponderance of evidence points. This is so notorious, in relation to the fundamental truths of morals and religion, that there are probably few who really disbelieve them, or profess to do so, who (if they examine themselves at all) are not conscious that the 'wish is father to the thought.' And what is true of habitual states of moral feeling, is also, in proportion, true of more transient states.

Certain, however, it is, that from one or other of the above causes, or from a combination of several, neither has the understanding the absolute dominion in the formation of our judgments, nor does she occupy an 'unshaken throne.' A seditious rabble of doubts, from time to time, rise to dispute her empire. Even where the mind, in its habitual states, is unconscious of any remaining doubt,—where it reposes in a vast preponderance of evidence in favour of this or that conclusion,—there may yet be, from one or other of the disturbing causes adverted to, a momentary eclipse of that light in which the soul seemed to dwell; a momentary vibration of that judgment which we so often flattered ourselves was poised for ever. Yet this no more argues the want of habitual faith, than the variations of the compass argue the

severance of the connexion between the magnet and the pole; or, than the oscillations of the 'rocking stone' argue that the solid mass can be heaved from its bed. A child may shake it, but a giant cannot overturn it.

And, as *a matter of fact*, there are, we apprehend, very few who have not been conscious of sudden and almost unaccountable disturbances of the intellectual atmosphere, unaccountable even after the equilibrium has been restored, and the air has again become serene and tranquil. In these momentary fluctuations, whether arising from moral or physical causes, or from causes of both kinds—from nervous depression, or a fit of melancholy, or an attack of pain, or harassing anxieties, or the loss of friends, or their misfortunes and calamities, or signal triumphs of baseness, or signal discomfitures of virtue, or, above all, from conscious neglect of duty—a man shall sometimes feel as if he had lost sight even of those primal truths on which he has been accustomed to gaze as on the stars of the firmament,—bright, serene, and unchangeable; even such truths as the existence of God, his paternal government of the world, and the divine origin of Christianity. In these moods, objections which he thought had long since been dead and buried, start again into sudden existence. They do more; like the escaped genius of the 'Arabian Nights,' who rises from the little bottle in which he had been imprisoned, in the shape of a thin smoke, which finally assumes gigantic outlines and towers to the skies, these flimsy objections dilate into monstrous dimensions, and fill the whole sphere of mental vision. The arguments by which we have been accustomed to combat them seem to have vanished, or, if they appear at all, look diminished in force and vividness. If we may pursue the allusion we have just made, we even wonder how such mighty forms should ever have been compressed into so narrow a space. Bunyan tells us, that when

his pilgrims, under the perturbation produced by previous terrible visions, turned the perspective glass towards the Celestial City from the summits of the Delectable Mountains, 'their hands shook so that they could not steadily look through the' instrument; 'yet they *thought* they saw something like the gate, and also some of the glory of the place.' It is even so with many of the moods in which other 'pilgrims' attempt to gaze in the same direction; a deep haze seems to have settled over the golden pinnacles and the 'gates of pearl;' they, for a moment, doubt whether what others declare they have seen, and what they flatter themselves they have themselves seen, be any thing else than a gorgeous vision in the clouds; and 'faith' is no longer 'the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.'

And as there are probably few who have profoundly investigated the evidences of truth, who have not felt themselves for a moment at least, and sometimes for a yet longer space, as if on the verge of universal scepticism, and about to be driven forth, without star or compass, on a boundless ocean of doubt and perplexity, so these states of feeling are peculiarly apt to infest the highest order of minds. For if, on the one hand, these can best discern and estimate the evidence which proves any truth, they, on the other, can see most clearly, and feel most strongly, the nature and extent of the objections which oppose it; while they are, at the same time, just as liable as the vulgar to the disturbing influences already adverted to. This liability is of course doubled, when its subject, as in the case of Pascal, labours under the disadvantage of a gloomy temperament.

A circumstance which in these conflicts of mind often gives *sceptical* objections an undue advantage is, that the great truths which it is more especially apt to assail, are generally the result of an accumulation of proof by induction, or are even dependent on quite

separate trains of argument. The mind, therefore, cannot comprehend them at a glance, and feel at once their integrated force, but must examine them in detail by successive acts of mind,—just as we take the measurement of magnitudes too vast to be seen at once, in successive small portions. The existence of God, the moral government of the world, the divine origin of Christianity, are all truths of this stamp. Pascal, in one of his 'Pensées,' refers to this infirmity of the logical faculties. He justly observes,—'To have a series of proofs incessantly before the mind, is beyond our power.' *D'en avoir toujours les preuves présentes, c'est trop d'affaire.*

From the inability of the mind to retain in perpetuity, or to comprehend at a glance a long chain of evidence, or the total effect of various lines of argument, Pascal truly observes, that it is not sufficient for the security of our convictions, and their due influence over our belief and practice, that we have proved them once for all by a process of reasoning; —they must be, if possible, tinctured and coloured by the imagination, informed and animated by feeling, and rendered vigorous and practical by habit. His words are well worth citing:—'Reason acts slowly, and with so many views upon so many principles which it is necessary should be always present, that it is perpetually dropping asleep, and is lost for want of having all its principles present to it. The affections do not act thus; they act instantaneously, and are always ready for action. It is necessary, therefore, to imbue our faith with feeling, otherwise it will be always vacillating.'*

It will not, of course, be imagined that, in the observations just now made, we are disposed to be the *apologists* of scepticism; or even, so far as it is yielded to, of that transient doubt to which the most powerful minds are not only liable, but liable in

* Vol. ii. pp. 175, 176.

defiance of what are ordinarily their strong convictions. So far as such states of mind are involuntary, and for an instant they often are, (till, in fact, the mind collects itself, and repels them,) they are of course the object not of blame but of pity. So far as they are dependent upon fluctuations of feeling, or upon physical causes which we can at all modify or control, it is our duty to summon the mind to resist the assault, and to reflect on the nature of that evidence which has so often appeared to us little less than demonstrative.

We are not, then, the apologists of scepticism, or any thing approaching it; we are merely stating a psychological fact, for the proof of which the appeal lies to the recorded confessions of many great minds, and to the experience of those who have reflected deeply enough on any large and difficult subject, to know what can be said for or against it.

The asserted fact is, that *habitual* belief of the sincerest and strongest character is sometimes checkered with transient fits of doubt and misgiving; and that even where there is no actual *disbelief*—no, not for a moment—the mind may, in some of its moods, form a very diminished estimate of the evidence on which belief is founded, and grievously understate it accordingly. We believe that both these states of mind were occasionally experienced by Pascal—the latter, however, much more frequently than the former; and hence originated, as we apprehend, those passages in which he speaks of the evidence for the existence of a God, or for the truth of Christianity, as less conclusive than he ordinarily believed, or than he has at other times declared it. At such times, the clouds may be supposed to have hung low upon this lofty mind.

So little inconsistent with a *habit* of intelligent faith are such transient invasions of doubt, or such diminished perceptions of the evidence of truth, that it may even be said that it is only those who have in

some measure experienced them, who can be said, in the highest sense, to believe at all. He who has never had a doubt, who believes what he believes for reasons which he thinks as irrefragable (if that be possible) as those of a mathematical demonstration, ought not to be said so much to *believe* as to *know;* his belief is to him knowledge, and his mind stands in the same relation to it, however erroneous and absurd that belief may be. It is rather he whose faith is exercised — not indeed without his reason, but without the full satisfaction of his reason — with a knowledge and appreciation of formidable objections, — it is this man who may most truly be said intelligently to believe.

While it is true that we are called upon to receive the great truths of Theology, whether natural or revealed, on evidence which is less than demonstrative, we are not to forget that no subjects out of the sciences of magnitude and number, admit of any such demonstration. We are required to do no more in religion, than we are in fact necessitated to do in all the affairs of common life — that is, to form our conclusions upon a sincere and diligent investigation of moral evidence. And, after all, such an arrangement is not only in harmonious analogy with all the conditions of our ordinary life, but, if the present world be indeed a state of moral probation — if it be designed to test our diligence and sincerity, to teach us what is so suitable in a finite and created being, a submissive and confiding posture of mind towards the Infinite Creator — such an arrangement is essential to our course of moral discipline and education. If we are required to believe nothing but what it is impossible that we should doubt — that is, nothing but what it would be a contradiction to deny — where would be the proof of our willingness to believe on the bare assurance of wisdom and knowledge superior to our own? Wise men assuredly consider it as a most important element in the education of their own children, not indeed that they should be taught to

believe what they are told without any reason, (and if they have been properly trained, a just confidence in the assurances of their superiors in knowledge will on many subjects be reason sufficient,) yet upon evidence far less than demonstration; indeed, upon evidence far less than they will be able to appreciate, when the lapse of a few brief years has transformed them from children into men. We certainly expect them to believe many things as *facts* which as yet they cannot fully comprehend — nay, which they tell us are, in appearance, paradoxical; and to rest satisfied with the assurance, that it is in vain for us to attempt to explain the evidence till they get older and wiser. We are accustomed even to augur the worst results as to the future course and conduct of a youth who has not learned to exercise thus much of practical faith, and who flippantly rejects, on the score of *his* not being able to comprehend them, truths of which he yet has greater evidence, though not *direct* evidence, of their being truths, than he has of the contrary. Now, 'if we have had earthly fathers, and have given them reverence' after this fashion, and when we have become men have applauded our submission as appropriate to our condition of dependence, 'shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?'

If, then, the present be a scene of moral education and discipline, it seems fit in itself that the evidence of the truths we believe should be checkered with difficulties and liable to objections; — not strong enough to force assent, nor so obscure as to elude sincere investigation. God, according to the memorable aphorism of Pascal, already cited, has afforded sufficient light to those whose object is to see, and left sufficient obscurity to perplex those who have no such wish. All that seems necessary or reasonable to expect is, that as we are certainly not called upon to believe any thing *without* reason, nor without a *preponderance* of reason, so the evidence shall be such as

our faculties are capable of dealing with; and that the objections shall be only such as equally baffle us upon any other hypothesis, or are insoluble because they transcend altogether the limits of the human understanding; which last circumstance can be no valid reason, apart from other grounds, either for accepting or rejecting a given dogma. Now, we contend, that it is in this equitable way that God has dealt with us as moral agents, in relation to all the great truths which lie at the basis of religion and morals; and, we may add, in relation to the divine origin of Christianity. The evidence is all of such a *nature* as we are accustomed every day to deal with and to act upon; while the objections are either such as re-appear in every other theory, or turn on difficulties absolutely beyond the limits of the human faculties. Take, for example, the principal argument which proves the existence of God; the argument which infers from the traces of intelligent design in the universe, the existence of a wise and powerful author. In applying this principle, man only acts as he acts every day of his life in other cases. He acts on a principle which, if he were to doubt, or even affect to doubt, he would be laughed at by his fellow-men as a ridiculous pedant, or a crazy metaphysician. Whether indications of design, countless as they are inimitable, with which the whole universe is inscribed, are likely to be the result of chance, is a question which turns on principles of evidence with which man is so familiar that he cannot adopt the affirmative without contradicting all his judgments in every other analogous, or similar, or conceivable case. On the other hand, the objections to the conclusion that there is some Eternal Being of illimitable power and wisdom, are precisely of the nature we have mentioned. A man makes a difficulty, we will suppose, (as well he may,) of conceiving that which has existed from eternity; but, as something certainly exists now, the denial of the existence of such a Being does not relieve from that

difficulty, unless the objector plunges into another equally great, — that of supposing it possible for the universe to have sprung into existence without a cause at all. This difficulty, then, is one which re-appears under any hypothesis. Again, we will suppose him to make a difficulty of the ideas of self-subsistence, — of omnipresence without extension of parts — of power which creates out of nothing, and which acts simply by volition, — of a knowledge cognisant of each thing and of all its relations (actual and possible, past, present, and to come), to every other thing, at every point of illimitable space, and in every moment of endless duration. But then these are difficulties, the solution of which clearly transcends the limits of the human understanding; and to deny the doctrines which seem established by evidence which we *can* appreciate, because we cannot solve difficulties which lie altogether beyond our capacities, seems like resolving that nothing shall be true but what we can fully comprehend — a principle again which, in numberless other cases, we neither can nor pretend to act upon.

It is much the same with the evidences of Christianity. Whether a certain amount and complexity of testimony are likely to be false; whether it is likely that not one but a number of men would endure ignominy, persecution, and the last extremities of torture, in support of an unprofitable lie; whether such an original fiction as Christianity — if it be fiction — is likely to have been the production of Galilean peasants; whether any thing so sublime was to be expected from fools, or any thing so holy from knaves; whether illiterate fraud was likely to be equal to such a wonderful fabrication; whether infinite artifice may be expected from ignorance, or a perfectly natural and successful assumption of truth from imposture; — these and a multitude of the like questions are precisely of the same *nature*, however they may be decided, with those with which the historian and the advocate, judges, and courts of law are every day required to

deal. On the other hand, whether miracles have ever been, or are ever likely to be, admitted in the administration of the universe, is a question on which it would demand a far more comprehensive knowledge of that administration than we can possibly possess, to justify an *a priori* decision. That they are possible is all that is required; and that, no consistent theist can deny. Other difficulties of Christianity, as Bishop Butler has so clearly shown, baffle us on every other hypothesis; they meet us as much in the 'constitution of nature,' as in the pages of revelation, and cannot consistently be pleaded against Christianity without being equally fatal to Theism.

There are two things, we will venture to say, at which the philosophers of some future age will stand equally astonished; the one is, that any man should have been called upon to believe *any* mystery, whether of philosophy or religion, without a preponderance of evidence of a nature which he can grasp, or on the mere *ipse dixit* of a fallible creature like himself; the other, that where there *is* such evidence, man should reject a mystery, merely because it is one. This last, perhaps, will be regarded as the more astonishing of the two. That man, who lives in a dwelling of clay, and looks out upon the illimitable universe through such tiny windows—who stands, as Pascal sublimely says, between 'two infinitudes'—who is absolutely surrounded by mysteries, which he overlooks only because he is so familiar with them—should doubt a proposition (otherwise well sustained) from its intrinsic difficulty, does not seem very reasonable. But when we further reflect that that very mind, which thus erects itself into a standard of all things, is most ignorant even of that which it ought to know best—itself, and finds there the most inscrutable of all mysteries;—that when asked to declare what itself is, it is obliged to confess that it knows nothing about the matter—nothing either of its own essence or its mode of operation; that it is sometimes inclined to think

itself material, and sometimes immaterial; that it cannot quite come to a conclusion whether the body really exists or is a phantom, or in what way (if the body really exist) the intimate union between the two is maintained;—that it is perplexed beyond expression, even to conceive how these phenomena can be reconciled,—proclaiming it to be an almost equal contradiction to suppose that Matter can think, or the Soul be material, or a connexion maintained between two totally different substances, and yet admitting that one of these must be true, though it cannot satisfactorily determine which;—when we reflect on all this, surely we cannot but feel that the spectacle of so ignorant a thing refusing to believe a proposition merely *because* it is above its comprehension, is of all paradoxes the most paradoxical, and of all absurdities the most ludicrous!

LITERARY GENIUS OF PLATO: CHARACTER OF SOCRATES.*

MANY of our readers doubtless recollect Warburton's criticism on Mallet, 'that he had written the life of Bacon, and had forgotten that he was a philosopher.' Some of them may deem us chargeable with a similar blunder, in professedly treating of Plato, and saying so little of his peculiar system of metaphysics. But we are not without hope, if they will give us their patient attention, that they will acquit us on this point, and feel disposed to admit that, in the particular phases in which we propose to regard him, there is enough, and more than enough, to occupy the limited space allotted to the present essay.

Though we have placed certain works at the head of our lucubrations, and shall refer to them from time to time as we proceed, we need not remind our readers that it is long since reviewers supposed it to be necessary that they should have some book to review.

* 'Edinburgh Review,' April, 1848.

1. *The Apology of Socrates; the Crito, and Part of the Phædo.* With Notes from Stallbaum, and Schleiermacher's Introductions. 12mo. London: 1840.

2. *A Life of Socrates.* By Dr. G. WIGGERS. Translated from the German With Notes. 12mo. London: 1840.

3. *A Biographical History of Philosophy.* By G. H. LEWES. Series I. *Ancient Philosophy.* 2 vols. 12mo. London.

4. *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology.* Edited by WM. SMITH, LL.D., Editor of the 'Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.' Art. *Plato.*

5. *Initia Philosophiæ Platonicæ.* P. Van HEUSDE. 8vo. Traj. 1827.

The present article even a little transcends the ordinary licence in that respect; for it is written, not so much to criticise any works that have appeared, as to point out one or two desiderata in our literature; and in the hope that it may haply stimulate some competent scholar and enterprising publisher to supply them. It is not any one book which has produced the essay; it is the hope that the essay may produce a book.*

There is perhaps no great genius of antiquity at all approaching Plato, either in the importance or in the splendour of his productions, to whom, upon the whole, so little justice has been done by English translators. While many of the chief writers of antiquity have been repeatedly translated—with various merit, indeed, but in most cases more than respectably,—a comparatively small portion of Plato's writings has occupied the attention of any English scholar at all qualified to do him justice; and that little has never been published in a form likely to command any considerable number of purchasers. But what has been done, and what may, we conceive, be successfully attempted, will be more appropriately stated after we have made a few preliminary observations.

The scholarship of our age *ought* to be able to raise up an English Schleiermacher, or an English Cousin.

* Since this essay appeared, partly perhaps in consequence of it, entirely new translations of many portions of Plato's works have been presented to the English public. It is unnecessary to advertise the reader that none of the remarks on the worthlessness of English translations apply to these. The writer is not sufficiently acquainted with them to express a deliberate opinion on their merits; but the most casual inspection will show, that, though probably it cannot be said that Plato has yet found an 'English Schleiermacher, or an English Cousin,' (who even then, to do him justice, must be in a condition to afford 'a labour of love' of many years' duration), the translations referred to are a great advance on that of Thomas Taylor. Their appearance has rendered a few sentences of this essay, as originally published, irrelevant, and these have accordingly been omitted.

But, waiting patiently the discharge in full of a demand, which we may be thought to have almost waived by our long indifference, we would thankfully accept of payment in moderate instalments. For some of the more abstruse writings of this great author are not very intelligible in the Greek, and are scarcely translatable at all into English; others which are intelligible have long ceased to have any interest, except as connected with the history of opinions and the development of philosophical systems; and, however important to the student in metaphysics or the historian of philosophy, will always be more readily and profitably consulted by such men in the original, than they can be in any translation, however excellent.

But after making large deductions on this ground, there remains no inconsiderable portion which, whether we consider the value of the contents, or the rare graces of the style, ought to be as carefully translated into the vernacular of all nations pretending to a literature, and in a dress not wholly unworthy of the original, as any other of the masterpieces of classical antiquity. To all this part of the writings of Plato may be applied those proud words which Thucydides employs in relation to his own history. They are 'the heritage of all posterity.'

Even considered simply as *unique* specimens of a very peculiar and transcendent species of literary genius, there are parts of his writings which deserve all the skill and taste which the most accomplished translator could possibly lavish on them. Plato is one of the very few prodigally gifted men the products of whose intellect are as remarkable for their *form* as for their *matter;* characterised not only by great depth and great subtlety, but enriched and adorned with the most various and even contrasted species of literary beauty; as resplendent with the graces of taste, wit, and imagination, as they are distinguished by the traces of a profound, acute, and highly speculative

mind. If those lines of Milton (himself an ardent student of Plato) in which he pronounces

> 'Divine Philosophy,
> Not harsh and rugged, as dull fools suppose,
> But musical, as is Apollo's lute,'

be ever true, they are surely so in relation to philosophy as it is found in the pages of the 'Master of the Academy.' In this point of view, indeed, Plato stands alone in the annals of philosophy. Many of his Dialogues are the only examples the world possesses of nearly perfect success in one of the most difficult of all conceivable kinds of composition, and deserve, were it only for this reason, to be presented to our countrymen with every advantage which our language can supply. They offer one among many proofs of that inventive genius of ancient Greece, which at once discovered and carried to perfection nearly every species of composition, and which seemed to leave succeeding ages only models for imitation. In this point of view alone, some of the writings of Plato may be commended to the study of all time: and to leave them un-translated or ill-translated is to defraud the unlearned of much enjoyment, and the great author of part of that homage to which he has as rightful a claim as either Homer or Demosthenes.

While France and Germany can boast, that in each of these countries, one of their greatest scholars, in point of capacity, erudition, and philosophical acumen, has devoted himself to the translation of the entire works of Plato, — Victor Cousin in the one, and Schleiermacher in the other, — Britain has nothing of the kind to show. The German translation, indeed, was left incomplete, but so far as it goes it is allowed to be admirable. The only translation we possess of the entire works of Plato, is that published by the notorious Thomas Taylor: in which, while incorporating the labours of previous translators, he has managed to mar them by his professed emendations, and to

give the remainder in a form in which no reader of Plato could by possibility recognise the mutilated original. But a few words more of this by-and-by. As to translations of particular dialogues, it may be said that of the 'Immortal Trilogy,' which immediately relates to the last scenes of the life of Socrates — the Apology, the Crito, and the Phædon, — creditable translations have appeared in recent times; but, at all events, they have had a very limited circulation. And beautiful as these dialogues are, they are far, very far, from exhibiting the phases of Plato's intellectual character in all their variety and richness. Of some other of the Dialogues, and those among the most interesting, a translation, characterised by considerable fidelity and elegance, appeared from the pen of the unfortunate Floyer Sydenham, about a century ago.* But the work was brought out in an expensive form, and has never, so far as we are aware, been republished. Even these, however, leave untouched several of Plato's greatest pieces, and such as are most durably valuable, whether regarded in a philosophical or literary point of view: we allude more particularly to the Theætetus, the Gorgias, and the Protagoras. Besides, these translations are far from being distinguished throughout by equal merit, and in many places fall short of that idiomatic grace, which a version of such an author, in order to do him justice, imperatively requires. A translator of Plato ought to be not merely competently skilled in Greek, but, still rarer qualification! — to be a great master of English.

But the book which has attracted most notice, because most accessible from its cheapness, is a version

* This translation comprised the Io, Greater and Lesser Hippias, Banquet (with the exception of the speech of Alcibiades), Rivals, Meno, First and Second Alcibiades, and Philebus.—Of two of these (the Io and Banquet), many of our readers must have seen an elegant, though very free, and not always accurate, version among the posthumous works of Shelley.

from the French of M. Dacier's 'Select Dialogues;' that is, it is a translation of a translation, in which the beauties of Plato are strained off by a double process. It was executed more than a hundred and twenty years ago, and is marked by innumerable negligencies, inaccuracies, and vulgarisms. It has, notwithstanding, been repeatedly reprinted, and only lately we saw it advertised with professed corrections from Sydenham *and Taylor* on the title-page. From Sydenham, indeed, corrections might have been supplied in abundance, but unhappily Sydenham never translated any in this collection except the brief dialogues entitled the First and Second Alcibiades; and from a collation of many passages of these dialogues as given in this edition, we can bear witness that the traces of any emendations or alterations from Sydenham are slight indeed.

But as to Taylor—whose bulky five volumes are one continued slander on Plato's good name, both as a man of genius and a philosopher—the correcting of any other translation from *such* a source, can remind us only of certain economical methods sometimes adopted among the poor,—of mending a broken window by a stuffing of straw. Whatever else the straw may do, it at least does the very contrary of what a window ought to do: it effectually shuts out the light. It were as easy to correct a translation of the Bible by the light of the Koran of Mahomet, as to correct a translation of Plato by that of Taylor.

Taylor was certainly in many respects a remarkable man, but in nothing more so than in the whimsical delusion by which he supposed himself capable of translating Plato; except, perhaps, in his equal delusion that he was commissioned to do the same cruel office by Aristotle. We are not quite sure, indeed, that the former was not the more gigantic error of the two. In translating Aristotle, he could but totally demolish the philosopher; there were few graces of manner to destroy: in rendering Plato, he showed

how possible it is for a translator at once to obscure the sense and annihilate the elegance of even the greatest genius; and suffering all the ethereal qualities to evaporate, to reduce the rich and perfumed leaves which he had consigned to so remorseless a distillation, to a fœtid and miserable *caput mortuum*. His splendid quarto titlepage, promising us the entire 'Works of Plato,' is but like the brilliant plate on a coffin lid; it is after all only the corpse of Plato which lies within; and that too in a very advanced state of decomposition.

In an early volume * of this journal will be found some strange specimens of Taylor's blunders and inelegancies, especially in his translation of the Protagoras. The critic remarks that he could have adduced equal enormities from that of the Theætetus. Though he has not cited them, we can fully substantiate his assertion. From a multitude which we had noted, we will amuse the reader with only two, — both occurring within the limits of a couple of pages. In the eloquent description which Socrates gives of the contrasted characters of the true philosopher, and the keen, sharp, but contracted 'little soul' formed by early and incessant practice in legal chicaneries, he remarks, 'that those who from their youth up have been versed in the law courts, stand a chance of appearing, in comparison with those who have been educated in philosophy and in like liberal pursuits much as slaves compared with the free born.' Plato here uses the word κυλινδουμένοι, the root of which literally means 'to roll round,' and in a secondary sense was sometimes employed much like the Latin *versor*, to 'be busied about.' Mr. Taylor gives the following exquisite translation: — 'Those who from their youth have been *rolled like cylinders* in courts of justice,' &c.; a version not much more scholarlike or graceful than if some one, wishing to trans-

* Edinburgh Review, vol. xiv.

late out of English such a phrase as 'those who write a good round hand,' should express himself in terms which literally translated back again should be, 'those whose handwriting is like unto spheres.' Mr. Taylor is so delighted with the image which his rendering of the word presents, that he has repeated it in both the Sophistes and Politicus. The other instance is equally ludicrous:—Socrates having commented with severity on certain opinions of the deceased Protagoras, Theodorus, who had been a friend of his, says, 'We are running my associate hard, Socrates.' Socrates replies in his ironical way, 'but then, my friend, it is not clear whether we are not missing the truth while so doing. It is indeed probable that, being older, he was also wiser than we are; and if he could just now raise his head above-ground as far as the shoulders, he would very probably reprove us both; — me for uttering much nonsense, and you for assenting to it, and then vanish below again.' Taylor says, 'If suddenly leaping forth, he should *seize me by the shoulders*, it is probable that he would prove me delirious in many things,' &c.

Such blunders, and they are of perpetual occurrence, alternately move a reader acquainted with the original to mirth and indignation; while those who know Plato in no other form, must certainly think him the most unintelligible and inelegant of writers.*

* The words εὐφήμει ὦ ἄνθρωπε, which in English would be tantamount to 'hush! my friend,' or 'good words, I beseech you! Mr. Taylor perpetually translates by 'predict better things, O man!' For the words ὦ δαιμάσιε, ὦ βέλτιστε, he can find no more idiomatic equivalent than 'O wonderful man!' and 'O best of men!' while ὦ δαιμόνιε is grotesquely rendered, 'O demoniacal man!'

Even where the meaning could hardly have been missed by him, it is incredible with what odd perversity he manages to render it utterly unintelligible to the English reader. 'Since you inherit none of your father's property,'—says Socrates to Hermogenes in the Cratylus; this Mr. Taylor translates, 'since you have no authority in paternal matters!'

Taylor, who must have been by nature of an eccentrically constructed mind, further muddled himself with deep draughts of the philosophy of the Alexandrian school of commentators, some of whom have done by Plato what so many of their brethren did by the Scriptures; and by the extravagancies of a mystical and allegorical system of interpretation, have succeeded at times in making the greatest of Greek philosophers almost as nonsensical as themselves. Under grandiloquent nothings, they too often imagined they were giving utterance to oracles of superhuman wisdom. Taylor was just the man to be easily intoxicated with this heady liquor, and forthwith mistook his intellectual drunkenness for veritable inspiration. The wildest vagaries of this allegorical school he hesitates not to follow, not only with obsequiousness but with rapture. Hundreds of pages has he written or translated in the shape of notes and commentary, on whose fatuous face not a gleam of intelligence is seen to play, and to which it is impossible to imagine that he could have himself attached any definite meaning whatever.

Difficult as it may seem at first sight to believe, the history of philosophy and every-day observation compel us to admit that there is a class of persons who imagine that whatever is obscure is profound; and who love the notion and reputation of depth so much that they prefer a muddy stream, however shallow, to

It is droll to hear Taylor saying that he had adopted Sydenham's translation and notes, as far as that writer's want of a 'more profound knowledge of Plato's philosophy' would permit; and equally droll to hear him blaming Spens' translation of the Republic for its Scotticisms and inelegancies! His knowledge of Greek, even as a language, was not sufficient to protect him from the indignity of occasionally making his translation from the Latin. As to modern languages, it was his boast that he knew not a word of any of them except his mother tongue: our former critic generously offered, if it would add to his glory to be reckoned ignorant of that too, to bear testimony that his knowledge of it was abundantly scanty.

a clear one, however deep. To such minds, mere sounds, if they seem to convey something grand or mysterious, are a source of delight; and with them words, which, in the language of Hobbes, are the counters of wise men and the money of fools, pass from hand to hand, or rather from mouth to mouth, as a trustworthy symbol of value.

Mere English readers are entitled to the means of knowing something more of Plato than they can learn from Taylor; and one of our chief objects on this occasion has been to help forward so desirable an end, by showing what are the most prominent features of universal interest in his writings, and what especially are the chief characteristics of his literary genius.

For the learned, indeed, various profound questions as to the philosophical system of Plato, will always have their just attraction. What that system precisely was, especially in its abstruser doctrines; what was the progress of its development in Plato's own mind; how far it was a consistent fabric, or a pile of heterogeneous materials and varying orders of architecture; whether any harmonious system can now be elicited from his writings, and how far, and in what respects he is inconsistent with himself; what was the one design which so many critics affirm he had in view in the entire series of, at least, his principal productions, and what their mutual coherence and succession, regarded in that light; and, again, what was the historical order* of their composition, and which of the works attributed to him are spurious, and which authentic; — these questions, and others

* A curious example of the precariousness of the reasoning on such subjects may be seen in a note of Stallbaum on the Phædrus (p. 257. B.), in which, by a single remark, he at once neutralises some of the refined arguments of Van Heusde and Schleiermacher, adduced to prove (true though the theory most probably is on *other* grounds) that the Phædrus was an early composition of Plato. Gray adopts the supposition that it was his first dialogue.

like them, will probably form an everlasting source of νυκτομαχία to the learned. In truth, they have been eagerly discussed, especially by our German neighbours, with abundance of erudition and ingenuity; sometimes, too, with a degree of passion, and sometimes with a tone of confidence, which oddly contrast with the shadowy nature of the interests at stake, and the uncertainty and perplexity of the points in debate. But a large portion of the writings of Plato possess an interest wholly independent of the decision of any or of all such questions, and will continue to charm every intelligent reader, in whatever way these problems may be decided.

From the extent to which these profounder questions are pursued in many works on Plato, a reader unacquainted with the original would hardly conceive to how large a proportion of his remains our last remark applies. 'That the dialogues of Plato,' says Professor Brandis* 'were from first to last not in-

* Art. PLATO. Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology. Edited by W. Smith, LL.D. The articles in both the dictionaries edited by this gentleman are in general most ably executed. If we were to take exception to any of the biographical ones, it would be to two or three in which the editor has deemed it necessary to resort to foreign aid. On his list of contributors there are those who, for the *English* public, would in our judgment have executed the task much more advantageously. The articles more particularly referred to are those on Aristotle and Plato, the one by Professor Stahr, and the other by Professor Brandis. Of the profound acquaintance of these eminent scholars with the authors of whom they treat, there can be no doubt; and there is every reason to confide in the accuracy and fidelity of the translator, Mr. C. P. Mason. There is also, we gladly admit, much interesting matter in the account of the life and writings of these eminent philosophers; yet when we come to their philosophy, we somehow find the subject involved in mists which we cannot help attributing in part to the foreign medium through which it is presented to us. The whole mode of employing language on philosophical subjects is so different among our German neighbours,—we say nothing at all of their superiority or inferiority in this respect,—that translations from them are almost always vague and unsatisfactory:

tended to set before any one, distinct assertions, but to place the objects in their opposite points of view, could appear credible only to partisans of the more modern sceptical academy.' In this we fully agree: only let it be acknowledged how much there is that is intelligible and delightful, apart from the solution of this problem. The difficulty of the problem, Professor Brandis himself admits. 'It is impossible,' says he, 'not to feel the difficulty of rendering to one's self a distinct account of what is designed and accomplished in any particular dialogue, and of its connection with others.' While it is admitted that Plato was not without his systematic purpose, it yet must be conceded to Mr. Lewes, (though he, perhaps, states the objection rather too strongly,) that few writers are chargeable with more frequent inconsistencies; inconsistencies very natural, indeed, in the gradual development of opinions, slowly matured and variously expressed in the course of a long career, but still incapable, like other contrarieties, of being kneaded into any harmonious system. It is probable too, that, in attempting to harmonise his system, due allowance

even where the meaning is at last understood, the tedium of expression excites perpetual irritation. Where great abstruseness of thought is superadded to the 'langweiligkeit' of style, we are reminded of a journey through an American forest, jolting along in a cart without springs, over a corduroy road, and surrounded by umbrageous depths which the eye in vain strives to penetrate. These remarks apply with special force to Mr. Dobson's translations of Schleiermacher's 'Introduction to the Dialogues of Plato.' From a comparison of several passages with the original, we have no reason to doubt either the skill or fidelity of the translator: yet we will venture to say, that the book is one of the most wearisome to read in the English language.

The present opportunity is taken of recommending two publications, the titles of which will be found on the first page of this essay (Nos. 1 and 2.), edited by Dr. W. Smith.— We should be happy to find that there was sufficient encouragement to induce him to present other portions of Stallbaum's admirable edition in a similar form; but Stallbaum's Introductions should be included as well as his Notes.

has not always been made for the latitude which Plato may have permitted to the dramatic form of his dialogues. Critics who have not united the requisite aptitudes for philosophical discussion with an exact appreciation of the beauties of a most refined species of composition, have sometimes supposed him to be serious where he was only playful, and have tortured themselves and him to discover his consistency. In particular, as Stallbaum*, one of the clearest and most instructive of his commentators, observes, the very covert irony of the Platonic Socrates, which is sometimes grave enough to deceive even the most astute, has now and then imposed on erudite simplicity. What was thus only a grave joke has been transformed into a truly laughable wisdom, and a defect of refinement and taste has become an error in the interpretation of philosophy. At all events, if Socrates could but have foreseen all the platitudes which the Alexandrian commentators have uttered on the mysteries couched under some of his delicate satire, an involuntary chuckle must have been heard from behind his mask.

On one of the above mentioned questions, — the authenticity or spuriousness of certain dialogues, we may be pardoned for offering two or three general remarks. The boldness with which German scholarship pronounces certain writings of Plato spurious, would be amusing if it were not so provoking. Ast, Socher, Ritter, Schleiermacher, all reject, or hesitate to receive, some dialogues, (though happily they are not quite agreed among themselves *which* they are to cashier,) pronounced authentic by the utmost possible strength of external evidence; they suspect them to be spurious, simply on account of their *conjecture* that there is something in the internal evidence inconsistent with what they have *conjectured* must have been the design of Plato in the development of his entire sys-

* See particularly Præfatio ad Protagoram, pp. 1, 2.

tem of philosophy; or again, because they observe some inferiority in the literary execution. As to the first objection, their own serious differences of view (however ingenious some of their hypotheses) ought to have convinced them of the extreme precariousness of such grounds. As to the second, we may well say with Mr. Lewes, 'What writer is at all times equal to the highest of his own flights? What author has produced nothing but *chefs-d'œuvre?* Are there not times when the most brilliant men are dull, when the richest style is meagre, when the compactest style is loose? The same subjects will not always call forth the same excellence; how unlikely, then, that various subjects should be treated with uniform power? The "Theages" could hardly equal the "Theætetus;" the "Euthydemus" must be inferior to the "Gorgias." No one thinks of disputing Shakspeare's claim to the "Merry Wives of Windsor," because it is immeasurably inferior to "Twelfth Night," which in its turn is inferior to "Othello."'

There is not one of these suspected dialogues, which it would be more unreasonable to reject than the Greater Hippias. Not only is there no external evidence against it, but, except from the fantastical reason that it contributes nothing to the development of some assumed system of Plato's philosophy, all the internal evidences of manner, style, and the happiest dramatic vivacity, are most conspicuously in its favour. Schleiermacher, while he states his doubts in one page, pleasantly does his best to answer them in the next. Having contended that the irony is ruder and less delicate than that of Plato in general he yet admits that there is 'abundance of pleasantry' in the composition, and that if we fully knew the circumstances and design of it, we should probably see much more of its beauty. Meanwhile, it seems to us that enough is apparent even now to betray the genuine manner of Plato. The question discussed in it is one of the most subtle and difficult in the whole

field of intellectual criticism; that is, the essence of the beautiful, or what it is which makes us denominate so immense a variety of objects by that one epithet; a question which has, perhaps, not even yet been solved to the full satisfaction of every one, and which it is no more wonderful that Plato should have left undetermined in this dialogue, than that he should have left equal difficulties at the close of the Theætetus without any positive solution. The erroneous theories he confutes are, some of them, not very dissimilar to those which have been so often repeated in modern times. The first answers of Hippias, till he comes fully to understand the nature of the question, are not much more absurd, (absurd though they are,) than might be expected from one who is, by implication, represented as a total stranger to metaphysical niceties*, and who has been principally engaged in the study of mythological antiquities, and such like 'old wives' fables,' as Socrates himself hints.† Nay, they are not much more absurd than the answers which no mean men of modern times have given to the same question, when vainly searching for the beautiful in some one class of material forms or qualities;—not much more absurd than that of Burke, who found diminutiveness essential to beauty, or that of Hogarth, who found its essence in a certain curve.

To reject ancient writings on the frivolous internal evidence upon which a German scholar often depends,

* 'Does not the proposer of the question,' says Hippias, when Socrates has stated it in the person of his imaginary objector, 'desire to have it told him what is beautiful?'—'I think not, Hippias,' says Socrates, 'but to have it told him *what the beautiful is.*" Hippias cannot see the difference.

† 'I perceive,' says Socrates, after Hippias has been boasting of the interest with which the Lacedæmonian youth had listened to his 'auld-warld' stories, 'I perceive why they were so delighted with you,—you were of the same use to them as old women are to children—to amuse them with pretty fables; *πρὸς τὸ ἡδέως μυθολογῆσαι.*'

would require the critic to possess a tact not less delicate than that which enabled a certain conjuror to detect the recent presence of spirits by the *odour* which they had left behind them; or that which distinguished the two renowned ancestors of Sancho Panza in the matter of wine, who being requested to pronounce judgment on a full cask, decided,—one of them, that it had a slight tang of iron, and the other, that it had a tang of leather. On emptying the cask, the wisdom of both was justified, for there was found at the bottom an iron key with a leathern thong attached to it!

But we must resume.—Plato's metaphysical system, let it be ever so successfully illustrated or restored, can be of interest only to the scholar or the scientific antiquary, as marking an epoch or supplying a link in the historical development of philosophy. It is among the things that have been; it has not now a single follower, and will probably never have another, unless now and then some Thomas Taylor should return once in the long revolution of a Platonic year. Plato's archetypal ideas, his metempsychosis, his cosmology, his doctrine of the pre-existence of the human soul, and that all our knowledge is but reminiscence—these and other related dogmas have gone the way of so many other philosophies.

It is sometimes said, indeed, that, even in the construction of such an adventurous system, Plato was prompted by the severity of his dialectics, while others have represented it as the exuberance of a rich poetic fancy. 'It is a mistake,' says Mr. Lewes, speaking of Plato's doctrine of reminiscence, 'to suppose this a mere poetical conception. Plato never sacrifices logic to poetry. If he sometimes calls poetry to his aid, it is only to express by it those ideas which logic cannot grasp, ideas which are beyond demonstration; but he never indulges in mere fancies.'—There is a sense in which both state-

ments are true enough. Perplexed, like so many other philosophers, to account for the origin of knowledge and the formation of general ideas, it may be said that his logical subtlety led him to frame the theory of archetypal ideas, and the doctrine of reminiscence, as the sufficient solution; but it is not less true that imagination supplied his logic with the materials, and that his speculations involved just as much difficulty in their proof as the solution of the mysteries they were designed to remove. All such gratuitous theories for intractable phenomena are but the repetition of the Hindoo cosmogony; and when we have got the world on the elephant's back, and the elephant on the tortoise, we still need something for the tortoise to rest upon. Philosophers are but too apt to forget, when they make hypotheses for difficult cases, under the stress of *such* logical necessities, that a truer logic would teach them that when they have arrived at phenomena for which they have no other solution than fanciful assumptions, they had better leave them alone. In the same sense — and the same apology has been made for them — Descartes was led by his *logic* to his vortices, and Leibnitz to his monads: but it was imagination, rather than logic, which handed them their materials. For our own parts, we would just as soon rest in a mystery which nature and fact have made for us, as feel ourselves obliged (a little farther on) to rest in one, which any such supposed logic has gratuitously created. There is no lack of instances of the use of hypothesis in science. On the other hand, the abuse of hypothesis formed its history for ages; and in all such cases, it would be a waste of time and labour not to stop at A, if after one doubtful step through equal darkness we are still obliged to stop at B.

But it must not be supposed that there are not portions of Plato's philosophy, which, though involving, in the sense which Plato meant them to convey, some of the above fantastical dogmas, may be even now

perused by the general student with signal advantage; his reasonings, in many cases, simply involve more than the truth, not what is contrary to it, and are not, therefore, vitiated by the residuum of error which we reject. For example, and by way of explaining our meaning, it has been very truly observed that Plato's 'archetypal ideas' correspond to our 'general notions' as expressed by 'general terms,' and *something more;* that is, he believed in their real existence, somewhere or other in the universe, external to any and to all minds. Now nothing in Plato is more remarkable than the ingenious and exhaustive induction by which he seeks (as he is fond of expressing it), 'The one in the many,' or the essence of that which we find existing in many different forms, species, and individuals, till he has discovered it in the most comprehensive genus and under the true limitations. These admirable specimens of the investigation of general truth do not lose one particle of their beauty or cogency because Plato believed in the independent existence of ideas, and they may still be read as among the earliest and most striking models of a genuine method of philosophising. If we could name the quality by which we denominate all objects 'beautiful' that are ever denominated so, it is manifest that it matters little to us that Plato thinks there is 'an archetypal beauty' external to our minds, and subsisting as an independent existence.—And, apart from the positive results of such investigations, they may have been of much service as instructive illustrations of a certain *method.*

But neither is this all of what science owes to this feature of the writings of Plato, considered in a purely philosophical point of view. If the 'method' itself be of greater value than the *positive* results, yet the *negative* results are often of the highest importance. Few have been more frequently triumphant in the exposure of the errors and sophistries of others. It may be humiliating to admit it, but it is not less a

fact. that metaphysicians have in general been more potent to confute error than to establish truth. They have had more success in demolishing empires than in erecting them: and in this they only share the fate of other conquerors, of most of whom it may be said that the gigantic ruins of the cities they have destroyed still strew the plain, as memorials of their power, long after every trace of their own dynasties has passed away. The confutation of error can never, however, be thought a slight achievement; so long, alas! as it shall continue to be true, that a great part of human wisdom consists in unlearning the delusions, or guarding against the influence, of human folly. It is difficult to overrate the services of Plato in this particular. In the Theætetus, for example, the masterly reasonings by which he has refuted so many shallow bases of science, and especially that too pleasant sophism of Protagoras — that the senses are our only guide, — that truth is what each individual thinks or feels it, or, in the sophist's language, that 'man is the measure of all things,' — can never be read without profit and admiration; nor, negative as the conclusions are, would we exchange them for a 'whole wilderness' of theories like that of archetypal ideas.

It is well said by a recent writer; 'As Sir C. Wren gained nearly as much credit for the scientific manner in which he removed the ruins of the old St. Paul's Church as for the genius and skill with which he planned and constructed the new edifice, so Plato should receive the commendation which is due to him for the elaborate and searching scrutiny to which he subjected the erroneous views current in his time, before he ventured to propound the grand and original conceptions on which his own philosophy was built up.'*

But it is on his speculations in *moral* science, after

* Penny Cyclopædia. PLATO; an article necessarily brief, but which will well repay perusal.

all, that Plato's claims, as a philosopher, to the gratitude of mankind, principally rest. To the believer in a yet purer and nobler system of ethics, his system must always possess peculiar and transcendent interest, as affording (in conjunction with the ethics of Aristotle) a standard or gauge of the highest and sublimest pitch to which the unaided intellect of man can aspire on these subjects. But independently of this, we do not think it possible for any one to dwell on his impassioned admiration and sublime and glowing delineations of the morally fair and beautiful, without being in some degree infected with his ennobling enthusiasm, in accordance with that law by which we become more or less assimilated to the image of whatever is the habitual object of a delighted contemplation. No author has left us more intense and vivid pictures of ideal virtue, or seems more enamoured as he gazes on them, or is more likely to inspire his readers with his own elevated sentiments; no one has explored more profoundly the anatomy of man's moral nature, or laid bare more skilfully that spiritual mechanism by which, wholly apart from their grosser and external effects, virtue and vice operate of themselves on man's happiness or misery; there is none in whose pages moral truth is so variously or beautifully illustrated; none who, in the expression of moral formulas, has approached nearer or so near the very words of the Gospel.* 'His object,' says Sir James

* Next to Homer and the inspired Hebrew poets, no author exercised a more powerful influence than Plato on the congenial sublimity of Milton's genius. Often in his poetry, but still oftener in his prose writings, is that influence conspicuously reflected. Both authors attain, more frequently than almost any others, that highest species of sublimity—the *moral* sublime; arresting and transfixing the soul by the naked majesty of lofty sentiments and purely spiritual abstractions, and readily dispensing with material and palpable images. It is in such lines as those in which Milton speaks of 'the thoughts that wander through eternity,' or of 'the mind as its own place,' which 'makes a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven,' that his muse

Mackintosh, 'is to inspire the love of truth, of wisdom, of beauty (especially of goodness, the highest beauty), and of that supreme and eternal mind, which contains all truth and wisdom, all beauty and goodness. . . . . He enforced these lessons by an inexhaustible variety of just and beautiful illustrations, — sometimes striking from their familiarity, sometimes subduing by their grandeur, — and his works are the storehouse from which moralists have, from age to age, borrowed the means of rendering moral instruction easier and more delightful.'

It has been said, by way of objection, that the ethics of Plato are too elevated and transcendental for humanity; that they are founded, 'not on a principle of obligation, on the definition of duty, but on the tendency to perfection.' Now, while there is something in this, and while there would be more, in case Plato

soars to the highest pitch, and in which he truly 'unspheres the spirit of Plato.' Milton was keenly alive to the beauty of the outward world — like 'the blind old man of Scio's rocky isle,' — and, Puritan though he was, as much so to the fascinating associations connected with ecclesiastical architecture. Yet it was not this which made him the sublimest of all poets, but the far rarer power, by which his imagination excelled in clothing principles of the simplest and severest character with all the grandeur of the most impressive eloquence, or the most splendid poetry. He who will read his wonderful description of the 'true office' of a Christian minister in book ii. chap. 3. of the 'Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy;' or that of 'Excommunication,' both there and in the 2nd book of 'Reformation in England,' will readily concede this. — Plato and Milton seem to have been alike in another respect, — in their defects as well as in their excellencies. For both, while most grandly conceiving the ultimate principles and the most comprehensive generalisations of ethical science, have shown themselves utterly incapable of discerning the 'refractions' and deviations (as Burke would say) to which abstract truths are subject when they enter this atmosphere of earth; both were alike destitute of that practical sagacity which knows how to apply ethics to politics in our work-a-day world. In this point of view, 'The Doctrine of Divorce,' and the scheme of 'Education,' will stand about on the same level with Plato's most Utopian of all republics.

had assigned moral excellence *no* other supports than those derived from such motives, yet, among the various influences under which human character is formed, surely the views which he has opened, and the motives which he has appealed to, are entitled to all but the highest place. The contemplation of a perfection, which humanity can never reach, is not without its benefit; the reflected image, though paler than the light which produces it, will be still *in proportion* to its brightness. Addison's illustration of the asymptote, always approaching its curve, though never touching it, would still be realised. But, in truth, the objection, as above stated, is too general: Plato does not confine himself to any *one* topic of persuasion, although unquestionably an abstract tendency to perfection is a favourite theme with him—as we think it ought to be. 'Perhaps,' says Sir James Mackintosh, after speaking of the various illustrations by which he represented virtue, 'in every one of these, an eye, trained in the history of ethics, may discover the germ of the whole or of a part of some subsequent theory. But to examine it thus, would not be to look at it with the eye of Plato. His aim was as practical as that of Socrates. He employed every topic—without regard to its place in a system, or even always to its force as an argument—which could attract the small portion of the community then accessible to cultivation; who, it should not be forgotten, had no moral instructor but the philosopher, unaided, if not thwarted, by the reigning superstition; for religion had not then, besides her own discoveries, brought down the most awful and the most beautiful forms of moral truth to the humblest station in human society.'

Nor must it, in justice, be forgotten, that no one has insisted more urgently on the coincidence, the indissoluble alliance, between virtue and happiness. In this, as Mackintosh has observed, there is no real discrepancy between Plato and Aristotle. 'Neither distinguished the elements, which they represented as

constituting the supreme good, from each other, partly, perhaps, from a fear of appearing to separate them.' But, he adds with admirable discrimination, 'Plato more habitually considered happiness as the natural fruit of virtue; Aristotle oftener viewed virtue as the means of attaining happiness.' Nor is this an unimportant distinction — and, as far as it goes, it is to Plato's advantage; for, though the infirmity of human nature requires to be 'undergirded' by all sorts of supports, and we would not, therefore, withdraw one of them, it is not of little moment whether the calculation of interest, or the appreciation of the morally fair and beautiful, has the habitual ascendency in our thoughts; it cannot be the same to our moral nature, whether our eye constantly dwells delighted on that fat and fertile soil through which the stream of virtuous action flows, and which it so prosperously irrigates, or on the transparent and beautiful stream itself. Let but a man always think that he is to do nothing but what is for his interest, however true it may be in the long run and on the great scale, — and that ever-present thought will narrow his mind to selfishness. The further question, — whether the perception of moral distinctions be natural or acquired, — is, for our present purpose, comparatively immaterial: it is sufficient, however deduced, that it exists.

Plato not simply imbibed the lofty ethical spirit and maxims of his master, but when he descants on such themes, he surrounds them with a halo of eloquence, which his master was incapable of imparting to them. Yet there is another characteristic of his practical ethics still more striking than the eloquence which adorns them: it is the astonishing decision, as well as sublimity, of his principles, and their close approximation to the evangelical modes of expression. Whatever may be the assumptions and extravagances of his physics, and the obscurities and mysteries of his metaphysics, or however visionary the character of his political speculations, the great principles of his

ethical system are clear as the light, and as sublime as they are intelligible.

And if their *perspicuity* amidst his too frequent obscurity, is worthy of note, still more so is their *decision* as contrasted with his usual hesitancy. While, under a profound impression of the ignorance of human nature, he has so often refrained from a dogmatical assertion of his opinions; while his dialogues on metaphysical and critical subjects sometimes seem little more than the play of an ingenious and subtle intellect, and contain more frequently refutations of the errors of others, or hints for the adjustment of apparently conflicting truths, than the establishment of any positive doctrines of his own; while his Socrates perpetually professes that he asserts nothing, but merely examines the opinions of others, and in that process of investigation, avows that, in confuting others, he has also sometimes confuted himself, or, as in a part of the Protagoras, finds that he has changed sides with his opponent; while these are so frequently the characteristics of Plato's manner, that he has even been unjustly considered by many as the patron of scepticism, — it is singular that on those *practical* questions of morals, in which, in the absence of revelation, there was just as much speculative difficulty, and a still greater danger of an erroneous bias from the influence of selfishness and passion, Plato is as firm as a rock, and invariably takes the nobler side. In spite of the apparent perplexities of the moral administration of the universe, in spite of the frequent spectacle of prosperous iniquity and oppressed virtue, it is sufficient for him to discern the *tendencies* of those great laws, to which their full development is not at present accorded; and he declares the certainty of their ultimate triumph in opposition to every doubt in his own breast, and every plausible but narrow theory issuing from minds less lofty than his own. That 'might can never constitute right,' — however welcome the paradox to the vanity and ambition of many

a young Athenian, and accordingly avowed by some of them in his dialogues; that perfect virtue is the highest element of happiness, and would, if possessed, assuredly secure it; that the morally wrong can never be the truly expedient; that the good and the beautiful cannot be severed; that it is always, and under all circumstances, better 'to suffer an injury than to do one;' that even the most successful crime is but a splendid misery, and involves, by inevitable necessity, in the remorse it awakens and the passions it nurtures, its own invisible but infallible avengers; that only he is a virtuous man who acts as virtue bids him, even though he could be assured that neither detection nor punishment awaited his crimes, and that he might commit them under the privilege of the ring of Gyges; 'that virtue is herself the soul's best recompense,' though it is true that all meaner felicities swell the pomp of her retinue;—these maxims he often proclaims with an authority as undoubting as if no plausible theories (so natural in the absence of a better revelation than the ordinary course of this world can supply) might be urged against them; nay, with a courage and commanding greatness which might well put to the blush many professed theorists in ethics, who have enjoyed a light for which Socrates and Plato could only wait and sigh.

And in the same manner, in relation to the kindred questions,—on a satisfactory solution of which the truth and consistency of the lofty moral maxims, just adverted to, so much depend,—on the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution, Plato, if not quite free from those fluctuations of feeling and opinion which were unavoidable to a deeply reflecting mind, and especially a heathen mind, is yet far more decisive than any preceding philosopher, and uniformly favourable to the more sublime and elvated view. Yielding in these cases to a noble instinct rather than trusting to the hesitation and caution of a subtle but inadequate reason;

supplying the defects of argument by a faith that that *must* be true which it would be ignominy to think false, he teaches those doctrines which a nature worthy of immortality would wish to be proved, even if it could not fully prove them, and strains every nerve to grapple with the difficulties which scepticism is so well content to leave unsolved.* Imprisoned like the rest of his species in that dark cave in which he represents the human race as lying bound, perceiving only the images and shadows of realities, and forming imperfect guesses of their nature and relations, he turns his eyes eagerly towards the 'light,' and longs to climb 'the steep ascent' to a more perfect day. The contrast between the buoyant and confident spirit of the Platonic Socrates when treating of these subjects, and the cautious, not to say sceptical, tone which he so often adopts on others, is certainly surprising, and, we do not think, has been sufficiently observed.

The feature now referred to must be admitted to constitute a singular merit. To us indeed, indulged with a better guide than his philosophy, the truths he uttered may sound elementary; though who among modern writers could have illustrated them with the eloquence of Plato? But in that twilight in which he speculated, amidst the frequent doubts even of those

* How near do the following sentences come to certain scriptural expressions:—'We must then suppose of the righteous man, that though he may be in poverty, in sickness, or any other *seeming* evil, yet to him these things will terminate in some good —living or dead. For it cannot be, that he who ardently desires to be a just man, and, by the cultivation of virtue, to resemble the Deity as far as humanity will permit, can ever be uncared for by the Gods.'—*Republic*, lib. 10. It is a sentiment he frequently gives expression to. Nor less philosophical than beautiful is that declaration in the tenth book of the 'Laws,' by which Bolingbroke might have learned something of the real proportions of spiritual things, 'That probably it were no difficult thing to demonstrate that the Gods are as mindful of the minute as of the vast.'

who might in general sympathise with his hopes and aspirations, and amidst the incessant, plausible, and practical denial of these truths on the part of all who wished them false, his conclusions show a vast comprehensiveness and elevation of mind; and entitle him to that appellation, which one of kindred genius among our British divines hesitates not to bestow upon him, of the 'great pagan theologue.'

It has been remarked by Mr. Macaulay, in his essay on Bacon, that the inductive philosophy is favourably distinguished from that of the ancients, inasmuch as it is a *fruitful* philosophy; — fruitful of useful discoveries and important practical results in every department of science; — while that of the ancient world was generally barren, occupied either with useless subtleties and logomachies, or exhausting itself on questions which are totally beyond the province of the human faculties; in the pursuit of which the ancient philosopher too often even contemptuously looked down on that humble office of interpreting nature, in which Bacon places the sum of philosophy. The remark is just, and the conclusion in favour of Bacon's philosophy incontestable; nor, so far as time was consumed in profitless and idle subtleties, can even an apology be offered in behalf of the ancients. For any thing one can see, it would unquestionably have been wiser to have spent in examining the phenomena of the material world, the time and mental energy which were wasted in vainly devising theories of metaphysics; still, in relation to the questions which turned on the destinies of man, and the theory of morals, who can wonder that, in the absence of an authoritative guide, the human mind was irresistibly attracted to perpetual meditation on such themes? Such is their tremendous importance (however solved) in the eye of any man who deserves the title of a *thinking* being, that it is surely no wonder that the most acute and inquisitive understandings — that is, those which were abstractedly the best fitted for the

investigations of science — should have been absolutely fascinated and riveted by them; or that they could hardly persuade themselves that they could have leisure for any purely material studies, till they had attained something like certainty on points of incomparably higher moment. Little as the multitude may have felt these things, there must have been many powerful minds who, as they questioned the mute oracles of nature — mute, we mean, on such points — must have been ready to exclaim, in the sublime words of Pascal, 'Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie.' Nor is it, perhaps, among the least of our incidental obligations to that Book in which so many myriads have found repose from the ceaseless questions which must often have agitated the greatest sages of antiquity, that so large a portion of the highest intellect of our race — the intellect of a Bacon, a Newton, a Pascal, a Locke — has, *in fact*, accepted its decisions on those questions, and thus been set free to pursue the path of science within the limits and in the direction, in which alone human science can be successfully prosecuted.

But neither have we yet stated all Plato's claims to some place in the vernacular literature of all civilised nations.

To the generality of readers, large fragments of the Platonic writings possess an interest quite separate from the merits or faults of Plato s positive philosophy, and even from success or failure in his mode of treating the particular subjects of the several dialogues. That interest depends not solely on the formal instructions given, nor on the continuity with which some one subject is pursued, but also on the incidental topics so gracefully introduced, and on the general charm and sweetness of the composition; it consists, very mainly, in striking apophthegms of moral wisdom, and the beautiful images which embellish them; in the lively illustrations which the reasonings perpetually derive from historic fact and

poetic fiction; in original and profound reflections on human nature, most happily expressed; in accurate and vivid sketches of individual character, or of classes of men, who still have their types among all nations; in the felicitous scenic descriptions, the animated dialogue, and rare literary beauties of every kind. Mr. Lewes has remarked of the Republic, that 'by reducing it to its theoretical formulæ, we are doubtless viewing it in its most unfavourable light. Its value and its interest do not consist in its political ideas, but in its collateral ideas on education, religion, and morals.' This is equally true of most of Plato's other productions. They abound in beauties which will not fade with the speculations with which they are intermingled, and may be appreciated by persons who care nothing for the philosophy of the author, or, indeed, very little for any other philosophy.

The sublime manner in which Plato announces and proves the great paradox in the Gorgias, that to do an injury is the greatest of evils; and that equal paradox, that he who commits crime with impunity is a yet more pitiable object than he who is punished for it, inasmuch as punishment is the appropriate medicine of the soul, and may reclaim it:—the impressive declaration which Tacitus has vouched and verified, that if we could but see the heart of a tyrant we should behold it torn and tormented by its own avenging passions; or that opposite picture of the all-entrancing loveliness of virtue, 'if she could but be seen;'—the striking reply to Agathon, when the latter said that he could not dispute with Socrates, 'You are not able, my Agathon, to argue against the truth, for to argue against Socrates is nothing difficult;'—the beautiful description of a contented old age, in the first book of the Republic, where the venerable Cephalus, in reply to Socrates' question as to how he finds the road which his younger companions must travel after him, avows that he feels, in freedom from the dominion of the passions, a sufficient compen-

sation for the loss of their pleasures;—the apposite warning in the Protagoras to the eager candidate for the dangerous privilege of a sophist's instructions, that we ought to be much more cautious in the purchase of mental than bodily aliment, inasmuch as science cannot be carried away in any material vessel, and examined afterwards, but must be taken home in the soul itself, so that the purchaser goes away with his blessing or his curse cleaving to him;—the scene in the same magnificent dialogue, in which the pompous sophist is represented as declaiming while he walks in the porch of Callias, accompanied by the troop of youths who followed him from all parts of Greece, 'charmed by his voice as if he had been another Orpheus,' and who, as he reaches the end of his walk, divide promptly to the right and left, and obsequiously form again in his rear;—the profound moral anatomy in parts of the Philebus, in which Plato reasons on man's chief good, and shows that neither pleasure nor intellect—'the vase of honey' nor 'the vase of cold but healthful water'—is sufficient to constitute it;—the communings of Socrates with his internal self (represented at the close of the Hippias Majór), when he returns home to night and solitude, self-accused for the inflation of supposed knowledge into which he might have been betrayed during the day;—the beautiful myth of the charioteer and his ill-yoked steeds, by which Plato shadows forth, in the Phædrus, the contest between the intellect and the passions, or that, again, in the Gorgias, by which he introduces the doctrine of future retribution, when the soul itself is to come before the incorruptible tribunal, 'unclothed' of all the adventitious things which now disturb our judgment;—his assertion, in the same place, of the perpetuity, in that future state, of the moral habits acquired now, and that the traces of evil passions remain in the soul, like scars of ignominy on the body;—the 'ravishing description' of Socrates and Phædrus

loitering during the heat of the summer noon on the banks of the 'cool Ilissus,' where we seem to hear (so musical its eloquence) the whisper of the wind in the plane-tree and through the long grass, and the murmuring of the brook, and the chirping of the grasshoppers, 'summer-like and shrill;'—the enthusiasm of the sage (who rarely wandered beyond the walls of Athens, and professed, like Dr. Johnson, that 'fields and trees would teach him nothing, while the men in the city could,') on being surprised into momentary rapture by the beauty of the scenery;—the humorous account of his being led thither—just as animals are allured onward by leaves or fruit—by the promised manuscript of Lysias, which Phædrus carries under his cloak;—the sublime prayer, not unlike that for which the wisest of men was so signally rewarded, with which the dialogue closes,—'Grant, ye Gods, that I may become beautiful within, and that whatever of external good I possess may be friendly to my internal purity: let me account the wise man rich; and of wealth let me have only so much as a prudent man can bear or employ;'—the sweet and solemn leave-taking of the world and his judges, and the confident declaration, that 'death is gain,' at the close of the Apology, together with those passages, more sweet and solemn still, in which the Phædo has immortalised his martyrdom, and which Cicero declared he could never read without tears;—these beauties, and a thousand others like them, must give delight to every man of taste and feeling, without any reference whatever to the general value or worthlessness of the speculations with which they are connected. Although, like scenes from Shakspeare's plays, they will be relished most by readers who can see them in their proper place, with all that introduces and surrounds them, they are yet inexpressibly charming even taken by themselves. Plato, as a whole, must, of course, be left to be fully appreciated by the scholar and the philosopher; but there are parts of him which

challenge a much more general admiration: just as Bacon's 'Essays' have been read with pleasure by thousands who never aspired to master the 'Novum Organum.' Nor are we by any means sure, if he were obliged to choose, that he would not, and ought not, to prefer the world-wide homage which is the reward of excellencies, which the wide world can appreciate, to the more circumscribed admiration of the little circle which can enter into his philosophy. Philosophies, alas! for the most part, are of mortal birth, and expire; but genuine eloquence and poetry are immortal.

We shall now, as we proposed, attempt an analysis of Plato's literary genius, to which we shall append a few remarks on that wonderful creation, the Platonic Socrates.

The mind of this great philosopher manifestly belonged to that very small class in which nature has not contented herself with bestowing some one or two faculties in extraordinary strength—compensating her partial generosity by a more niggardly allotment of other intellectual endowments; nor, on the other hand, was it a mind on which she had bestowed the most various endowments in equal but moderate proportion; on the contrary, it belonged to that select order to which Shakspeare and Bacon, Pascal and Leibnitz, are to be referred. It was a mind on which Nature had resolved to lavish all her gifts in their most splendid variety, and most harmonious combinations; rich alike in powers of invention and acquisition; equally massive and light; vigorous and muscular, yet pliable and versatile; master at once of thought and expression; in which originality and subtlety of intellect are surrounded by all the ministering aids of imagination, wit, humour, and eloquence. The structure of such a mind resembles some masterpiece of classic architecture, in which the marble columns rise from their deep foundation exquisitely fashioned and proportioned, surmounted with elaborate and orna-

mented capitals, and supporting an entablature inscribed with all forms of the beautiful.

Plato's style is unrivalled: he wielded at will all the resources of the most copious, flexible, and varied instrument of thought, through which the mind of man has yet breathed the music of eloquence. Not less severely simple and refined when he pleases than Pascal, between whom and Plato many resemblances have been pointed out in the essay on the former, — as in beauty of intellect, in the delicacy of their wit, in aptitude for abstract science, and in moral wisdom, — the Grecian philosopher is capable of assuming every mood of thought, and of adopting the tone, imagery, and diction appropriate to each. Like Pascal, he can be by turns profound, sublime, pathetic, sarcastic, playful; but with a far more absolute command over all the varieties of manner and style.* He could pass by the most easy and rapid transitions from the majestic eloquence, which made the Greeks say that if Jupiter had spoken the language of mortals, he would have spoken in that of Plato, to that homely style of illustration and those highly idiomatic modes of expression, which mark the colloquial manner of his Socrates, and which, as Alcibiades, in his eulogium, observes, might induce a stranger to say that the talk of the sage was all about shoemakers and tailors, carpenters and braziers.†

* Some author (if we mistake not) finds a resemblance between the humour of Pascal and that of Aristophanes. We wonder that the juster parallel of Plato did not suggest itself. As Voltaire said of the 'Provincial Letters,' that 'the comedies of Molière did not surpass them in wit, nor the eloquence of Bossuet in sublimity,' so it may be said of Plato, that Aristophanes scarcely surpasses him in humour, or Demosthenes in eloquence. Pascal and Plato also resembled each other in their deep melancholy, as well as in their happy powers of raillery. How often has that union of refined wit and profound sadness been exemplified in the history of genius!

† 'Aristotle,' says Mr. Lewes, 'capitally describes Plato's style as a middle species of diction between prose and verse.' But this critical dictum of Aristotle must be understood as applying only

Minds thus replenished and adorned with every species of intellectual excellence, with an equal variety and symmetry of powers, are indeed of rare occurrence. When they are permitted to appear among us, their productions are what we have stated Plato's to be, as remarkable for their *form* as for their *matter*. Great and original conceptions are clothed in corresponding beauty of attire; the works are themselves glorious exhibitions of artistic ability, as well as repositories of brilliant theories or profound speculation. As such, they are well worthy of our study; just as we gaze delighted on some antique vase or statue, not simply or even chiefly for the precious gold or marble of which it is made, but still more for the exquisite form in which they are moulded, and the exquisite skill and taste which have presided over the workmanship. Indeed with regard to the *influence* of human compositions on mankind —their permanent influence—the form is as essential as the matter; and, we may add, harder to be

to certain portions of Plato's compositions; it is false, if intended to designate any one uniform manner, for no such uniformity is to be found. Mr. Lewes himself not only admits that there are to be found in Plato passages of the most diverse beauty, but describes them with great vivacity (vol. i. p. 29.); though when he says Plato 'has *scarcely any imagery*,' he will, we think, find few to coincide with him. He is more correct when he says that his illustrations are 'for the most part homely and familiar.'

In truth it were as easy to state in one word what is *the* hue of the rainbow, as to describe by one epithet the many-coloured diction of Plato. Specimens of a style as severely logical as that of Locke, as simple and elegant as that of Addison, as impassioned and elevated as that of Milton in the more lofty portions of his semi-poetic prose, may all be found in his works.—The work of Mr. Lewes is a very lively one, and contains much instruction in a small compass. We must confess, however, that for a professed sceptic concerning the truth of any and all systems of metaphysical philosophy, his manner is sometimes a little too dogmatical. The *historian* of philosophy has almost as much reason to be sceptical of his conclusions, as the philosophers he examines; whether his *opinion* as to what were *their* opinions be correct, must be often as dubious as those opinions themselves.

attained. Take, for example, the 'Provincial Letters' of Pascal: many minds probably could have supplied the mere substance and staple of the argument which runs through that beautiful texture; but the consummate arrangement—the conception and conduct of the whole—the lively dialogue—the dramatic painting—the perpetual wit—the powerful eloquence—the singular originality—who but himself could have combined?

Great as is the dramatic skill of Pascal in that astonishing performance, not surpassed in our judgment by that displayed in any single dialogue of Plato, the latter has given us a far more diversified exhibition of similar powers. And certainly, as a proof of genius, the strength and facility with which he shapes and animates the very difficult form into which he has thrown his speculations, is even more extraordinary than are the speculations themselves. It is comparatively easy to embody the results of philosophy in a plain didactic statement; but to give them, without serious injury to their force or clearness, (especially when the subjects are abstruse and the points of discussion subtle,) in the form and colour of a fictitious dialogue, throughout which various characters, dramatically conceived and sustained, utter the sentiments appropriate to each; in which the colloquial language of actual life is preserved, and amidst all those interruptions, transitions, and naturally conceived incidents which impart verisimilitude to the whole—is a task which, but for the success of Plato, might have been supposed impossible, since of all writers Plato has alone succeeded in it. Not that we feel disposed to contest Mr. Lewes's adjudication, that even Plato often 'sacrificed the general effect to his scrupulous dialectics;' and that his incessant repetitions were designed 'deeply to impress on the reader's mind the real force of his method.' Such a compromise and, to a certain extent, sacrifice of the dramatic interest, is unavoid-

able, where the ultimate object is didactic and argumentative, and not the appropriate pleasure of poetry. But it will be readily conceded that Plato has more nearly approached the solution of this problem — this union of incompatibles — than any other writer; while in some dialogues—as in the Protagoras, which Schleiermacher regards as designed to exhibit the superiority of the dialogistic method of Socrates— the union of philosophical matter and dramatic skill is all but perfect. To deliver didactic matter in the *form* of dialogue has been often attempted; as by Cicero, Henry More, Fénélon, Bishop Berkeley, and Bishop Hurd. But, in general, even the better specimens of philosophical dialogue wholly fail in dramatic power, and are little else than a loose contexture of prolonged declamations in the mouths of two or three personages. No one can read the philosophical dialogues of Cicero, for example, without feeling the immense interval between himself and the great model whom he so ardently admired, but so imperfectly imitated.

The conception and conduct of Plato's dialogues show a peculiar species of dramatic skill of the very highest order. The scenes are often laid, the plot contrived, and the characters and incidents invented, with consummate judgment. The persons of the drama stand out in their appropriate characteristics as distinctly as the various forms in a group of Greek statuary,—diversified in their expression and their attitudes, but all natural and all beautiful.

'The Socratic Dialogues,' says Gray, in those posthumous fragments of criticism which give him as distinguished a name among scholars as he had long possessed among poets, 'are a kind of dramas, wherein the time, the place, and the characters are almost as exactly marked as in a true theatrical representation.'

The centre of nearly all these groups of philosophic painting is Socrates—a wonderful portrait for distinctness and individuality, even if it were a mere

copy of the great prototype; and a still more wonderful creation if, as is certain, it is in many respects an ideal representation of the artist's master. How far it was the one, and how far the other, has been matter of much dispute among the critics. That the great moral sage of Greece was, at all events, a very extraordinary character, is sufficiently evident even from the less ambitious delineation by Xenophon. That he was profoundly versed in his favourite science —that of Man, for which he had forsaken his early physical studies, because he had found them unsatisfactory; that he taught the most sublime and elevated ethics the heathen world had ever attained; that he gave his instructions gratuitously; that in the accomplishment of this noble, and, as he supposed, divinely appointed mission *, he utterly neglected his private affairs — not being of the opinion of Horace Walpole, 'that the public is big enough to take care of itself;' that he maintained incessant warfare with the tribe of wandering sophists who, for hire, taught those pernicious mysteries of dishonest logic and deceptive rhetoric which corrupted the Athenian youth; that he was simple in his manners, sincere in his actions,

* Much has been said of that difficult subject the 'dæmon' of Socrates. The diverse interpretations put upon the language of Plato and Xenophon respecting it are well known. For our own parts, we have no doubt that the view taken by Wiggers, and many other scholars, is substantially correct; that Socrates, like so many other highly gifted and susceptible minds, was not without a tinge of enthusiasm, and sincerely attributed the sudden and imperious suggestion of some premonitions and presentiments, for which he could not otherwise account, to a preternatural origin. We do not believe him to have been really inspired, as some suppose; the invocation of Erasmus, '*Sancte Socrates, ora pro nobis,*' does not rise to our lips; — but we could almost as readily bring ourselves to repeat it, as imagine him the *knave*, to which the theory of some of his professed admirers, among our too accommodating German interpreters, would (however unintentionally) reduce him. They profess to think that he was consciously cozening ignorance, though of course with most excellent intentions!

of incorruptible integrity and constancy, capable of uttering truth in the face of all danger, and incapable of uttering falsehood to escape it, — all this, history authenticates. Of his invincible love of justice, he gave a noble example on the only occasion on which he ever exercised the magisterial functions, opposing single-handed, and at the hazard of his life, the will of the Athenian democracy in one of their worst and most profligate acts of tyranny, and that, too, when all his colleagues cowered and bent before the storm. That he persisted to the close in the same consistent course, and died at last in the way so often told, and by Plato in particular with such inimitable pathos, as a martyr for truth and the victim of ignorance, calumny, and injustice, is also generally admitted.

It is more than probable that in the ideal representation which Plato has given of Socrates, some infirmities and foibles have been concealed or softened. History at least gives us reason to suspect it. In the dialogues of Plato his superiority of genius, and his skill in argument, are never displayed offensively; nor is there the slightest departure from the genuine humility which will ever be found to accompany that truest species of wisdom, of which alone Socrates claimed possession — the deep conviction of our own ignorance. But history does not altogether sanction this picture of perfect amiability and modesty; it more than hints at certain airs of dogmatism and superciliousness, and at a certain strut and portliness of manner, which remind us of the familiar moods of another great moralist nearer home, — peculiarities, however, which, as in this last case, might well be pardoned to so much genius and worth.

If in these and some other respects, the moral as well as intellectual character of Socrates has gained from the pencil of his disciples, there are other points, and those far more serious, in which no mean critics have supposed him to have greatly suffered. Instances will be found in some admirable critiques, full of vi-

vacity and learning, which appeared in the 'Quarterly Review' more than twenty years ago. Some of the scenes in which Socrates is presented to us were calculated, it is there surmised, 'to inspire the same doubts in his contemporaries which he has since excited amongst posterity, whether he was the Silenus that his exterior figure betokened, or the Silenus of the sculptors' shops, which, rude and grotesque to the outward view, opened to a touch, and disclosed within beautiful and exquisitely carved figures of the gods.'

The suspicion of Socrates intimated in this passage, seems to us scarcely just: and, indeed, throughout those very spirited articles, there appears a sort of prejudice against him. It must be admitted that both Plato and Xenophon have introduced him into scenes which are ineffably disgusting, and that in particular the eulogium of the drunken Alcibiades in the Banquet, wonderful as it is, contains a passage which no one who has ever read it would wish to read again; still we think it plain that Plato intended, even here, to intimate the superiority of Socrates to the worst vices of his countrymen, and his moral disapprobation of them. But though Socrates be thus exonerated, alas! what must have been the social condition of a people, in which a great writer could find in an exemption from the very lowest forms of human depravity so egregious a singularity, as to extort out of it a topic of compliment to the sage he revered and loved! What must have been their familiarity with the most infamous of vices, to induce even a drunken young profligate to point him out as a prodigy of temperance and fortitude, because he was not stained with them! Fully admitting the interpretation of Quinctilian to be correct, and that Plato intended 'ut Socratis invictam continentiam ostenderet, quæ corrumpi — non posset,' — we feel that the compliment of Alcibiades to Socrates is much as if some youth had innocently expressed his astonishment that *though* he had repeatedly tempted and invited a Milton or a Newton to indulge in cannibalism, yet 'such was the wonderful fortitude

and temperance of the men,' that they had resisted all his alluring importunities to partake of the choicest delicacies of a New Zealand *cuisine!* There are practices into which it is infamy indeed to fall; but which it can be no glory to shun.*

But whatever flatteries, intellectual or moral, may be supposed to lurk in the Platonic portrait of Socrates, they cannot be said to extend to his personal peculiarities, which are given with no complimentary fidelity. Those peculiarities, indeed, are not all formally described in any one specific enumeration, but are dramatically produced in the natural development of the successive features of his character in the varied course of the dialogues, just as different incidents and conjunctures suggest their introduction. We there see the simplicity of his manners — his somewhat *too* philosophic negligence of appearances — the oddities and eccentricities of an abstracted mind, such as history attributes to him — and even that eminent

* We must also admit, that, though Socrates himself had none but an honest meaning in his frequent inculcation of the pursuit of the supreme and essential beauty — that of wisdom and virtue — through all the lower forms of material beauty, as well as in his mystical, though not always wise, illustrations of the immortal through the medium of the mortal ἔρως, yet, to a people in the moral condition of the Athenians, such a path to purity would be a somewhat precarious and dangerous one. The road to Elysium in this case ran straight through the infernal regions, and there would be some hazard of the mortal traveller being detained upon the road. In vain will the philosophic Orpheus strive to recal the lost Eurydice, Virtue, by such strains; she is not for him, if he has to seek her in the shades. But, for obvious reasons, we say no more on this topic. We are content to refer to the sentiments before expressed in this journal, in a review of 'Mitchell's Aristophanes, vol. xxxiv. p. 303, *note*.

It is humiliating to think, in the case of the Greeks, on the contrast between their intense love of beauty and their familiarity with the most odious vices of human nature; and to see how little the utmost refinement of taste in the arts has to do with the correction of the passions. It is as if we beheld a being compounded of the angel and the demon; the intellect of the one, and the passions of the other.

grotesqueness of visage by which (with all reverence be it spoken) he was also distinguished. There is an amusing passage in the beautiful introduction to the Theætetus, where Theodorus, after describing the early mental promise of the youth from whom the dialogue is named, and gravely adding, that he is far from being beautiful, begs Socrates not to be angry: 'but, in fact, he has a strong resemblance to you, in the prominence of his eyes and in the *snubbishness* of his nose — only his eyes are not *so* prominent as yours, nor is his nose *so* snubbish.' Socrates receives the communication with imperturbable temper, as usual, and bids him call Theætetus to him. The youth approaches, and Socrates says, 'I have sent for you, Theætetus, just that I may look upon myself, and see what sort of a face I have; for Theodorus says that I resemble you.' We can easily imagine how awkward an ingenuous youth would feel under such a scrutiny, and how little he would relish the compliment involved. Socrates, however, who seldom failed to return a sarcasm, tells him, that if Theodorus had been a painter or a sculptor, his opinion on the resemblance of faces might, perhaps, have been entitled to attention; but as he was only a geometrician, it was not worth while to pay the least regard to him on such a subject, whether he praised or blamed. To this Theætetus, no doubt very cordially, agrees.

These odd features, and strange manners to match — not seldom allied to great genius and its attendant simplicity — must have given to the real Socrates a marked external individuality. Of his absence of mind, more than one story is told in ancient history. Socrates himself was fully aware, both from reflection and experience, of this ludicrous side of the philosophic character; and in his beautiful contrast in the Theætetus, between the true philosopher, 'ignorant even of his ignorance' of common matters (as he strongly expresses it), and the keen man of the world, does not omit to mention it. He illustrates the subject by a humorous reference to the adventure of

Thales, who, while astronomising as he walked, paid the penalty of unseasonable star-gazing by falling into a well; and was laughed at by a Thracian servant girl, for being so intent upon the distant as not to see what was at his feet. We are afraid that if it were worth while to retort the sarcasm on the multitude, it were easy to do so; for the great bulk of mankind are so intent upon what is close to them, that they hardly seem capable of reflecting on the distant and the future; so occupied with what is just at their feet, that they seldom raise their eyes to the starry heavens at all. Indeed, it is thus that Socrates turns the tables upon them. It is well, however, when the organs of mental vision, like the eye, can promptly adjust themselves to the degree of light and the distance or proximity of the object; and he who can do both these promptly, as the exigencies of the present or of the future—of the great or the little in life—demand, is alone worthy of the name of a fully developed man.

It may be readily believed that the abstraction of Socrates laid him open to ridicule. We all know the stories which are told of Newton:—how, one morning, having commenced dressing, and having got one leg into those garments which are without a name, he was arrested in the operation by a sudden flash of light on some profound theorem; and sitting down on the bed, remained in that attitude for some hours, transfixed in meditation; how, on another occasion, he accomplished a perhaps still more striking feat of abstraction—no less than that he thought he had dined when he had not; the human stomach being in general resolutely set against all such illusory conclusions. There is as wonderful a story told of Socrates: being on military service in the expedition to Potidæa, he is reported to have stood for four-and-twenty hours before the camp, rooted to the same spot, and absorbed in deep thought, with his eyes fixed on the same object, as if his soul were absent

from his body. This is, perhaps, as little true as some of the tales that are told of our own philosopher; but the popular invention or exaggeration of such anecdotes is always founded on a basis of fact; and we may rest assured that in the case of Socrates there were facts enow to found them upon.

But all the characteristics, whether mental or personal, which history attributes to the real Socrates, do not exhaust that wonderful creation which constitutes the Platonic Socrates; and it is with the Platonic Socrates we have now to do. In that portraiture, indeed, the peculiarities in question, though, as already said, probably softened in some instances, re-appear, and are most graphically described and most dramatically exhibited; but they are at the same time ideally represented and harmonised: not only so, they are wonderfully blended with *other* peculiarities, which Socrates either did not possess, or in a very limited degree; peculiarities which, in fact, constitute the soul of Plato himself, transmigrated into the person of his master, and speaking by his organs—yet without suggesting the idea of incongruity. If any such idea ever obtrude itself, it is owing to the disturbing influence of certain associations connected with the historic Socrates. Supposing the Platonic Socrates to be known to us only as a pure creation of fiction, we doubt whether any sense of inconsistency in the various phases, in which the character is presented, would have suggested itself; whether it would not have appeared to be the consistent *ideal* of a complete philosopher; of a man who, superior to all other men, as Alcibiades is made to declare him, was designed to be a combination of the most various mental endowments, conjoined with profound simplicity of mind and habits; of plastic capacity of adaptation to any circumstances, with a constant superiority to all. Whether the Richard III. of history be the Richard of Shakspeare is of great importance, if we consider the last as an historic por-

trait; of no importance at all in estimating its value as a poetic creation. It is much the same with the Platonic Socrates; in some respects inconsistent with the Socrates of history—in no way inconsistent with the ideal of Plato's conception. The whole creation, indeed, looks astonishingly natural—the superinduced elements being *fused* into union with the original qualities; and though we may see that the Platonic Socrates never existed, any more than the Hamlet or Othello of Shakspeare, we also see that the whole is a harmonious assemblage of attributes and qualities, which might have existed in one and the same person without any violation of the conditions of the probable in human character.

Probably, however, even the discrepancy with the Socrates of history is much less than has generally been supposed. We must recollect that a large portion of the most abstruse of the Platonic doctrines is put, not into the mouth of Socrates, but into those of Parmenides, Timæus, and others; and again, that in the myths of the Phædrus, he professes to speak in a poetic style unusual with him, and under the sudden access of a divine afflatus. Such passages, especially introduced, (as they often are,) in a vein half sportive, half serious, are perhaps not inconsistent with that rich combination of powers which we know that the real Socrates possessed; and still less with that wonderful facility of adaptation, which, preserving the basis of strong sense and invincible logic, Plato wished to exhibit in his dramatic representative. Nor was the original character of Socrates destitute of a vein of mysticism and enthusiasm; and (as has been remarked by Mr. Mitchell) even in that later and maturer form in which Plato has portrayed him, traces still appear of many of the peculiarities, which probably rendered the early Socrates of the Clouds a less extravagant caricature than has been generally imagined. Schleiermacher, in his 'Essay on the Worth of Socrates as a Philosopher,' truly asserts

that, if his stature has been exaggerated to gigantic dimensions by Plato, it has been dwarfed by Xenophon:—he was in intellect a mean proportional, if we may so speak, between the Platonic and Xenophontic Socrates. We must also agree with this great critic, that if there were not often greater fascination and variety in the discourses of Socrates than appear in the pages of Xenophon, it is hard to conceive that the everlasting disputant should not have been voted by the volatile multitude a prodigious *bore*, or 'that he should not, in the course of so many years, have cleared the market-place and the workshops, the walks and the wrestling-schools, by the dread of his presence.'

Whatever the intellectual powers of the real Socrates, it is to Plato, we apprehend, that we must ascribe very much of the metaphysical depth, by which the Platonic Socrates is distinguished, as well as the subtle sophistry which, when he wished to baffle a sophist, he knows as well how to assume as to expose. To the same source must we attribute the splendid declamation in which he sometimes indulges, and which was, in general, the object of his contempt and distrust; his many coloured diction and his varied imagery—now sublime, and now homely; his flowing eloquence, adapting itself to all themes and all persons; and his peculiar vein of refined and delicate raillery. To this last quality no modern literature presents an adequate parallel; the nearest approximations, perhaps, are to be found in an occasional vein of Addison, or the 'Provincial Letters' of Pascal.

Similar modifications of the character of the actual Socrates, or 'exaggerations' of certain qualities, appear in other features of his dramatic representative. Even seeming *paradoxes* are effectually reconciled, so as not to interfere with the impression of a consistent whole. Neither his natural simplicity, nor his philosophic abstraction, appears incompatible with his thorough knowledge of life, a knowledge probably

more complete than that which the real Socrates possessed; nor does his profound study of the general theory of human nature seem inconsistent (as in many men it is) with a sagacious perception of the diversities of individual character, — to which he adapts himself with all the adroitness of a man practised in the ways of the world. Under an air of impassive stolidity and gravity, he conceals the quickest perception of the ludicrous and the most vivid sense of humour. Negligent in his attire, and severe in his habits, his indifference to the luxuries and refinements of life is represented as simple and sincere, — the mere consistency of a genuine philosopher, aspiring to be master of himself, of his necessities, and his passions, and to put his happiness as much as possible beyond the control of external elements; not paraded for admiration, nor prompted by the envy of superior wealth and splendour. He is no cynic; takes no credit for making himself uncomfortable, nor gratifies his pride by an affectation of humility. No one can say of him what he said himself so cuttingly to his disciple Antisthenes, that he could spy his pride through the holes in his thread-bare cloak. Nor would he ever have subjected himself to the reproof given to Diogenes. Placing his foot on the costly couch of Plato, the Cynic exclaimed, 'Thus I tread on the pride of Plato.' — Plato retorted, 'And with greater pride.' With all his uncouthness of feature and rusticity of appearance, the Platonic Socrates is, in conversation, always a perfect gentleman. He never loses sight of that exquisite refinement of manner which reigned over the social intercourse of the more polished Athenians, but keeps his temper throughout: and, though he may be giving expression to the most biting and caustic satire, it is with all the urbanity in the world.

Inured to temperance, and preferring it as a *habit*, he yet accommodates himself to all companies, and can partake of good cheer as heartily as any body.

In a most graphic passage in the dialogue called the Banquet, Plato carries this feature of his philosophic power of accommodation a little too far for our notions. 'No one ever saw Socrates drunk,' says Alcibiades in his panegyric, and adds, 'Of this, I expect you will shortly have a confirmation.' Accordingly Plato represents Socrates as vanquishing even those two jovial companions, Agathon and Aristophanes, one a tragic and the other the celebrated comic poet, at their own weapons, — arguing and drinking, and drinking and arguing with them all night long, the deep potations making on his head of adamant no impression whatever. The passage is so graphic a representation of the conclusion of a scene of ancient festivity, or rather, as it at last becomes, of revelry, that it may be worth while to condense the substance of it into a few sentences, without affecting the precision of a translation. The person from whose lips the report of the banquet is supposed to have been received, tells us, that many of the other guests having now gone home, he himself fell asleep in the banquet-room, and slept very soundly (the nights were then long), and that he woke about daybreak, just as the cocks were crowing: That on awaking, he saw that some of the guests were still asleep, and that others had departed: That Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates were the only persons still awake, and were drinking round out of a great goblet. He added that Socrates was arguing with them; but that he could form but an imperfect idea of the general course of the discussion — not having heard its commencement. Yet the sum of it he said was this: that Socrates compelled them to acknowledge that it was the province of the same poet to be skilled in the composition of both comedy and tragedy: That, having been forced to assent to this, though a little too misty readily to follow the argument, they got drowsy, and that Aristophanes fell asleep first; and afterwards, it being now broad day, Agathon; but that Socrates,

having vanquished them both in wine and logic, rose and went out. To conclude, Socrates went to the Lyceum, and, having washed himself, spent the day there just as if nothing had happened, and in the evening went home to rest.

We certainly do not adduce this passage to the laud and glory of the temperance of Socrates, which some of the commentators pretend Plato designed it to illustrate: for that is surely a novel sort of temperance which consists in a physical inability to swallow as much liquor as will produce drunkenness, and which originates in strength of head, rather than in the government of appetite. Plato evidently designed it merely as a proof of his indomitable hard-headedness, and power of accommodation to all sorts of circumstances; to show that to him it was all one to drink or abstain; to be a teetotaller or a three-bottle man; just as in the celebrated eulogium of Alcibiades, Socrates is described at Potidæa as overcoming all his fellow soldiers, in fasting if they must fast, and in drinking if they *must* drink; — enduring the utmost extremities of cold and heat, fatigue and hunger; living either as every body else does, or as nobody else can, according to circumstances; walking with naked feet on the ice and snow, and clad in the same garments in summer and winter.

Another apparent paradox in the Platonic Socrates, yet beautifully harmonised, is the contrast between his seeming scepticism and his intense love of truth. Deeply impressed with the ignorance of man, and declaring that the Delphic oracle could have had no reason for pronouncing him the wisest of his race, unless for this — that he knew that he knew nothing, while the rest of mankind did not even know *that* — he is yet perpetually questioning, contending, arguing, confuting, on almost all subjects, if we except those great moral truths, which his hopes and his faith, as well as his reason, seemed to carry beyond the mere domain of intellect. Still, however dissatisfied with

the result of his investigations, he is evidently always in sincere search of truth, and tormented when he cannot find it. His manner is as different as possible from that of a sceptic, who, in the love of paradox, *wishes* to prove every thing uncertain; and, however affected may be the simplicity of his understanding, it is evident that the simplicity of his heart is sincere.

The peculiar character of the *irony* of the Platonic Socrates has often been dilated upon. It is at all times difficult to discriminate the varieties of wit and humour, fugitive and multiform as they are; and it is almost impossible in the present case to do this by any brief definition. The quality assumes different forms. The word irony, so often applied to the manner of Socrates, would, in its modern sense, very imperfectly suggest all that is characteristic of his humour; or, rather, it would suggest but a very small part of it. The word signifies, with us, a literal expression of the contrary of what we *mean* to express; and it usually suggests the idea of a single phrase, or at most a sentence or two. But the irony of Socrates extends to the whole character which, for the time, he sustains; and to his whole course of procedure in stripping and confuting a conceited adversary. It may be not unfittingly expressed by saying, that it is a *logical masked battery*. Under the disguise, though in a manner amusingly varied, of a character which, in a deeper sense, he sincerely professed—that of being ignorant of every thing but his ignorance—Socrates enters the presence of some renowned master of wisdom with the air of a man intellectually poverty-stricken, bankrupt in all science and argument; and after, perhaps, affecting the profoundest veneration for his genius, or listening with an air of admiring stupefaction (as in the Protagoras) to his gorgeous declamation, he humbly suggests that some little difficulty still occurs to him, which he doubts not so much wisdom can in a moment solve; and begs, with deference, to ask two or three questions, simple ques-

tions—not at all with the idea of disputing the conclusions so cogently maintained, but simply for his own satisfaction. These urbane compliments and this affected humility are expressed with such entire gravity and self-possession, that they add unspeakably to the humour of the dialogue in the eye of those who know his real sentiments and intentions, and often make us wonder at even *his* power of face; while, to strangers, they must infallibly have suggested the idea of perfect sincerity. Indeed, even to those who are behind the scenes, the expresssions of compliment and admiration often seem so *very* grave, that unless we suppose them partly owing to a real admiration of powers, which—though, in his judgment, perverted, and to which he himself made no pretension—were yet felt to be splendid of their kind, we must confess that the irony of the Platonic Socrates sometimes comes as near a barefaced *lie* as we should care to impute to so renowned a lover of truth. The sophist, however, if a stranger, elated by his praises, and charmed with the deference of one who, so far from professing to rival him in his own field, seems likely rather to prove a docile listener than a formidable antagonist, encourages him in a patronising manner to propose his doubts and difficulties, and assures him of a satisfactory and instant solution. Socrates thanks him, and generally begins with some question apparently so simple—so stupidly simple, and at such a distance from the field of discussion, that his opponent, no doubt, often hesitates, whether most to admire the docility or wonder at the stupidity of the querist; and with a complacent smile, half of pity, half of contempt, promptly replies. Other questions succeed, faster and faster, more and more difficult, and gradually approaching in one long spiral of interrogations the central position, in which the unhappy sophist's argument stands; he now finds it impossible to escape, and confounded, perplexed, and irritated, discovers that he is compelled to admit some

palpable contradiction to his original assertions, and this too by means of those simple and innocent premises which he had so unsuspectingly granted. He feels himself within the coils of a great logical *boa constrictor*, who binds his folds tighter and tighter, till the poor sophist is absolutely strangled. Often, however, Socrates does not proceed to this at once; but, ingenious in the art of tormenting, and liberal of sport to the delighted spectators, he gently uncoils his folds, and suffers his victim to breathe awhile; but only to entangle him again in the same toils. Nothing can be finer than the art with which, in these interludes, Plato represents Socrates playing (as whalers would say) with the monster he has harpooned; or, as we deal with a fretted horse, patting, and soothing, and conciliating him;—turning the conversation for a time to other topics, to remove his victim's suspicions, and suffer his sullenness or his irritation to subside; often with the most provoking air of sincerity professing to condole with him on the sudden disappearance of that fine and promising speculation in which he had hoped to find a satisfaction of his own difficulties; urging him to try again, and give another definition; proffering his own assistance in the investigation, and pretending that they will hunt the truth in couples; asking him whether he does not think with him on such and such a point, though we are internally convinced all the time, that the plausible proposition in which he requests the sophist's concurrence will prove a fallacy in the upshot, and that all the assistance that Socrates will render him, will be slyly to give his companion's crutch a kick as they go along, and leave him sprawling in the mire. It is in these moods (if we may compare great things with small), that a homely representation of the Platonic Socrates may here and there be found in the conversations of the renowned Edie Ochiltree with the Antiquary. In the old blue gown's shrewdness, penetration into character, sound practical sense,

long-drawn banter, and provoking hypocrisy of condolence with the worthy Antiquary's disasters, a transient thought of the mocking figure of Socrates will again and again occur to a reader who has lately parted company with him in one or other of Plato's comic scenes.

Such are some of the scenes in which the Platonic Socrates plays a part—alternated, indeed, with prodigious skill and genius, according to the characters introduced and the subjects discussed. And if the real discussions, in which the original Socrates engaged, at all approached them in interest, no wonder that he should have been so great a favourite with the Athenian youth—independently of the reverence felt for his character and the value attached to his instructions. Neither a bull-fight at Madrid, nor an execution in London, could have greater attraction for the refined populace of those cities than the flaying and dissecting of a sophist at the hands of so dexterous an anatomist as Socrates, must have had for the intellectual and subtle youth of Athens.

While this kind of irony is the prevailing characteristic of the manner of Socrates, and constitutes its humour—not unaccompanied, however, with the most graceful incidental examples of repartee and raillery, in single sentences—there is a manifest modification of it according to the different nature and deserts of those with whom he was disputing. Upon the sophist he exercised it in all its pitiless severity; in his contest with them, he neither gave not accepted quarter. With whatever exaggeration their sentiments and proceedings may be represented by Plato, there can hardly be a doubt that, in the time of Socrates, the sophists were exerting a most pernicious influence on the youth of Greece, and more particularly of Athens. Arrogating the exclusive possession of wisdom, they pretended to have attained important secrets in political science; and boldly advertised that they could infallibly impart to the young, for a

certain sum of money, the arts of 'persuasion' and statesmanship, and the means in general of disputing successfully on any subject, 'making the worse appear the better reason.' It has been ingeniously maintained by some historians of philosophy, that this last supposition is incredible, since such an open insult to all public morals could never have been permitted in any community. And it is far from improbable, that in the description of the sophists, as a body, Plato and others may have given us in an extreme form what he believed and perceived to be the genuine tendency and effect of their conduct and instructions; nor would these tendencies be the less dangerous—rather more so—if, instead of being openly stated, they were carefully disguised. To drive the sophists from the field was a vocation worthy of the powers of Socrates.* Their claim to science was

* It would be a great error to suppose that Plato in the Gorgias, or in any other of his writings in which he inveighs against rhetoric, intended to imply that the art of persuasion was of no importance, or worse than none. He was not ignorant, any more than his scholar Aristotle, that much depends on the form in which truth and argument are presented, 'and that some men persuade more readily than others,'—the end and the topics being precisely the same. Indeed, the furtive way in which his Socrates so uniformly prepares for the admission of his arguments in the mind of the reluctant or ignorant listener, may convince us that no one was more deeply acquainted with this truth. Gorgias, it is true, would naturally stand aghast when Socrates, in reply to the question of Polus—what science he supposed rhetoric to be—answers, 'None at all, but a certain tact, or practical knack,' which has for its object to please and soothe ignorance by deceitful flatteries; and goes on in a style of admirable banter to degrade it to the level of 'cookery.' But the whole dialogue shows that Plato is directing his satire, not against any well-directed and honest efforts to *persuade*, but against such efforts when divorced from simplicity and rectitude of purpose; in a word, against that pernicious rhetoric, or rather, as Schleiermacher calls it, that '*soi-disant* art of politics,' which he truly believed was doing such infinite mischief to the young politicians of the day; according to which *success* was every thing.—The art of persuasive argumentation will, like every other *instrumental*

in direct opposition to his profession of ignorance: the mercenary character of their instructions, to the gratuitous teaching in which he gloried: they were urging his country towards its ruin, he was labouring to save it. With them, therefore, he kept no terms in the exercise of his ridicule; they were the rats of the commonwealth, and he the ferret; they were the crocodiles, and he the ichneumon. Always maintaining the same imperturbable temper and the same urbane tone, he yet pushes them to the last extremity; never suffers them to shuffle off a dispute with a quibble or a compliment to himself; and never rests satisfied till he has extorted from them, often as with a logical rack or thumbscrew, and after woeful grimaces on their part, the acknowledgment that they have affirmed what is incapable of proof. If in disputing with them, he at any time condescends to use their own sophistry, he never helps them to detect it, but leaves them to detect it themselves, or to be deceived by it, as may happen — unless, indeed, he has first procured their assent to it for the very purpose of confuting them. Sophists themselves, they are to be sometimes ensnared and punished by sophistry; 'the cunning are to be taken in their own craftiness.'

art, be capable of abuse; but it were a strange remedy for an abuse, to explode the thing itself, and by refusing to use it, leave the unprincipled the monopoly of its abuse. Nevertheless, the feelings with which we regard any particular rhetorical school must always depend on the characters of those who teach, and of those who are taught; and if, whether avowedly or in disguise, the art is *in fact* perverted, and its professors are found not merely maintaining that its abuse is an accident, but teaching their pupils to regard it as an unimportant accident, all wise men will have one and the same opinion of such a school. The art of defence is valuable, but if the fencing master sedulously teaches his pupils, or leads them inevitably to infer, that it little matters *how* the sword is used, all would judge that ignorance in the matter were better than skill. It is against such perverted rhetoric only that Plato speaks. — See Stallbaum's *Introduction to the Gorgias.*

Some brief examples of this pertinacity of manner may, perhaps, amuse the reader. When Protagoras intimates that, 'if Socrates pleases,' he has no objection to assent to a certain proposition, the latter replies that the argument has nothing to do with 'if you please,' or 'if you approve,' or any such conciliatory hypotheses; they are discussing, not assumptions, but their real sentiments, and every such 'if' (which, in this case, was certainly not likely to vindicate its ancient character of 'peacemaker') must be got rid of. Thus, too, in the Euthyphro, when in disproving one of the definitions of 'Holiness,' laid down by that champion of superstition, Socrates argues that, according to such definition, religion must be a sort of *traffic* between gods and men; 'A traffic let it be,' says Euthyphro, 'if you choose to call it so.' '*I* do not choose to call it so,' says the pertinacious disputant, 'unless it really be so.'—His favourite artifice of putting his interrogatories, not in his own person, but in that of an imaginary third party, is often employed to increase the ridicule with which he ultimately covers his opponent. Thus, in the Protagoras, having in a series of questions, (prepared *satis captiosè*, as Stallbaum says,) procured the sophist's assent to certain propositions, he gradually introduces a third party as interrogating them both, and begging their assent to some admissions simple enough, but inconsistent with those propositions. Having brought the argument to this point, he asks, 'If our querist should further say to us, What then were you affirming a little while ago? Did I hear you rightly? Did you not say so and so?—For my part, I should reply—In every thing else, except *one* thing, my friend, you heard quite correctly—it was so said; but in supposing that it was *I* who said it, you were mistaken. It was Protagoras here who said it; I merely asked the question.' In the Hippias Major, having demolished many of the sophist's theories of the beautiful, Socrates introduces his imagi-

nary interlocutor as urging a new objection to some explanation: 'Perhaps,' says the sophist, 'the man may not think of that, Socrates;'—a stroke of satire perhaps a little too broad, but designed to mark a sophist's solicitude rather for victory than truth: 'By the dog, Hippias,' is the reply, 'but that man would though — before whom I should be most of all ashamed to talk nonsense, and affect to say something when in reality I have said nothing.' 'Who is this man?' 'Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus; who would no more permit me to speak so glibly on points which had not been thoroughly investigated, than he would allow me to talk of things I am ignorant of, as if I knew them.'

The same familiarity and doggedness in reducing an opponent to the last extremities, is pleasantly displayed in other parts of the same dialogue. Thus, when in refuting one of the explanations of Hippias, Socrates presses him to say, whether he does not 'think that a sycamore ladle, under given circumstances, is more beautiful than one of gold,' the sophist, who strongly reluctates against this and other *vulgar* illustrations of so 'noble' a subject, suddenly bethinks himself of another hypothesis, and asks, 'Shall I tell you now, Socrates, what you shall say the beautiful is, so as to prevent the man from all further cavilling and disputing?' 'By all means,' says Socrates, 'but *not before you tell me*, which of the two ladles we have been talking of is the more beautiful, as being the more fit and becoming.' 'Well then, if it pleases you,' says Hippias, 'answer him, it is that made of the sycamore tree.' '*Now*,' replies Socrates, 'you may say what you were just going to say.' To another exquisitely vague explanation of Hippias, Socrates replies that, if he should offer such a solution to the unknown querist, he is afraid that he shall meet with something worse than ridicule; that he will get a beating for it. 'Will he not be punished,' says Hippias, 'for having beaten you in-

juriously?' 'I should think he would not, Hippias, is the sly retort: '*not* having beaten me injuriously if I had made him such an answer; but, as it seems to me, very deservedly.' Repeatedly baffled in the argument, the sophist, with a sophist's effrontery, declares that, though unaccountably at a loss, yet if he could but step aside for a moment, and meditate a little, he is confident that he should be able to hit upon the solution of the difficulty. 'But I am afraid,' says Socrates, 'so extreme is my desire of knowing it, that I shall not be able to wait your time;' and he again embroils him in fresh difficulties and contradictions.

Socrates does not mind even affecting a mental infirmity for the purpose of making his opponent more ridiculous. For instance, when Protagoras has once and again broken away from the close fight of brief question and answer into his gorgeous declamation, Socrates laments that he is unhappily gifted with a very short memory, and that if any one makes long discourses to him, he straightway forgets the subject of discussion. He deplores this infirmity—heartily wishes that it were otherwise—but since it is so, and since it is all one to so great a master of eloquence as Protagoras to speak copiously or briefly, he begs him to abridge his answers in condescension to his weakness. The whole scene, down to where Alcibiades says that Socrates is but jeering at them when he talks of his short memory, and that he will be security that Socrates shall *forget* nothing, is one of the finest examples of the Platonic raillery.

Very different, and in some respects more agreeable, is the exhibition of the Socratic irony, as he exercised it on the intellectual youths who repaired to him for instruction. It has the same general characteristics indeed, and the same amusing embarrassments are produced by it, but they are directed to a different end. We enjoy the discomfiture of the sophist as a piece of poetical justice; it is well that

arrogance and conceit should be humbled, and hollowness and pretension exposed. On the other hand, when Socrates is conversing with such youths as Theætetus and Meno, we see him using his pleasantry not for the purpose of perplexing them, though it has that effect most perfectly, but of eliciting their own latent strength and vigour—of developing their faculties in the search for truth—and of not merely teaching them truth, but teaching them the yet more difficult art of *finding* it for themselves. Doubtless, with all this, in so keen an anatomist of human nature, and so exact an observer of individual character, there is conjoined the pleasure of seeing a young mind at work; of beholding the pulsations, so to speak, of intellectual life; but there is evidently also a love—half sportive and half serious—of watching its mere perplexities—of playing fast and loose with it, and, as we say, *bamboozling* it. We often see this sort of play, more or less, in the intercourse of great minds, when humorous and amiable, with the young. They seem to enjoy almost equally the spectacle of the mystification they have occasioned, and the mental activity they have provoked; they love to puzzle them and enlighten them by turns. Young people are quite as sensitive, on their part, to this rapid alternation of jest and earnest, treacherous banter and effective aid. The stimulus which it imparts is a sufficient explanation of the fact, that they become more attached to such instructors than to a graver and more didactic pedagogue. But while it was doubtless an amusement to Socrates to watch the effect of his puzzling questions, and all the odd discomfitures and embarrassments to which his logic subjected his young disputants, he never fails in *their* case to lend them a helping hand. He here really 'hunted' the truth with them; he loved to share their toils, to point out the way to them, to beat for game, and has an evident satisfaction in letting them appear to take as prominent a part as possible in

running it down and killing it for themselves. In this spirit he encourages Theætetus, by telling him that he inherited, in behalf of the young, the same art as that of his mother Phænarete, who was one of those good matrons sent for in haste, when some young Athenian was about to be born into the world: He sustains, he says, a similar reputable office in relation to *mind*—that his business is to assist at any intellectual births which are attended with special difficulty, and to pronounce whether the new-born idea is worthy of being permitted to live. All the progeny of poor Theætetus, born with many throes, expire as soon as they see the light, under the rude hand of this logical accoucheur.

Of the different way in which he exercised his pleasantry, according as he was dealing with a sophist or with an ingenuous youth, we have a naïve statement by himself in the Meno. On the latter asking what Socrates would say, if it were objected to a definition which he had just given, that one of the terms was as little understood as those it was used to explain, Socrates replies, 'I should say that I had spoken the truth: and, if it were any of our very wise and wrangling and contentious sophists that asked the question, I should say, "I have spoken; and if I have not spoken to the purpose, it is your business to take up the discourse and refute me." But if friends now, such as you and I are, want to have a little conversation together, why, we must answer more gently, and, indeed, logically; for perhaps it is a more logical proceeding, not simply to say what is true, but to say it by means of truths already acknowledged by the pupil.'

In the same dialogue, Meno is supposed to tender himself in his own proper person as an example of the victimising force of the Socratic logic. He compares Socrates, who was constantly infusing doubt into others, to the torpedo, which benumbed whoever touched it: and, accordingly, he admits that he felt

under his hands cramped alike in thought and expression. Though he had often declaimed with fluent elegance, as he flattered himself, on the subject under discussion—the Nature of Virtue—he now found himself in helpless embarrassment. Socrates replies, that he does not raise doubts in other people, except when he is himself uncertain; and he denies, therefore, the justness of the comparison, unless the torpedo can benumb itself as well as others.

Mention has been made of the many beautiful fragments to be found in Plato's works, which are either capable of being separated without injury from the context, or are really collateral and episodical to the main topics discussed. We have often thought that a most delightful little volume might be compiled out of some such fragments; presenting entire scenes from particular dialogues;—for example, the highly graphic introductions and conclusions of many of them; some of the noble myths and fables by which Plato illustrates philosophic truth—descriptions of character—apophthegms and maxims of weighty and sententious wisdom—and select portions of the more lively and humorous conversation. Indeed, the entire substance of many dialogues might in this way be compressed into a very narrow space, by connecting the series of such extracts with a brief summary of the topics and arguments which fill up the intervals. To the majority of readers, such a mode of presenting many parts of the longer and more difficult dialogues would be even more intelligible, and far less tedious, than an entire translation; for it must be confessed that what Gibbon too summarily calls the 'verbal argumentation' of Socrates, and the profuse and often prolix illustrations, are a little apt to weary the patience of any reader, who is not either a philosopher or a scholar.

Such a work as we venture to sketch, would a little resemble Van Heusde's entertaining volumes, entitled 'Initia Philosophiæ Platonicæ.' We beg to suggest to

Mr. Knight, whether it might not form two or three volumes of his popular series, and we should certainly felicitate both him and ourselves, if he could prevail on the same accomplished scholar, who has recently given us such admirable translations of some of the lives of Plutarch, illustrative of the Civil Wars of Rome, to attempt its execution. Or if the task of compilation be too tedious for scholars so capable of better things, might not two or three combine for the purpose — each taking distinct dialogues? One or two scenes from the 'Gorgias' are appended to the second volume of Mr. Lewes' 'Manual of the History of Philosophy;' and, though necessarily compressed, they are translated with so much spirit, that we hope their unknown author might be persuaded to join the party. Is it too much to expect some such tribute from the modern scholarship of England to the memory of the great master of the Academy, who has hitherto been so inadequately treated by English translators?

But we must conclude, and we will do so with a single remark. We certainly hold the entire dramatic projection and representation of Socrates in the pages of Plato to be one of the most wonderful efforts of the human mind. In studying him, it is impossible that his character as a teacher of ethics, and his life-like mode of representation, should not suggest to us another character, yet more wonderfully depicted, and by the same most difficult of all methods, that of dramatic evolution by discourse and action; of one who taught a still purer, sublimer, and more consistent ethics, pervaded by a more intense spirit of humanity; of one whose love for our race was infinitely deeper and more tender; who stands perfectly free from those foibles which history attributes to the real Socrates, and from that too Protean facility of manners which, though designed by Plato as a compliment to the philosophic flexibility of *his* character of Socrates, really so far assimilated him with mere

vulgar humanity; of one, too, whose sublime and original character is not only exhibited with the most wonderful dramatic skill, but in a style as unique as the character it embodies — a style of simple majesty, which, unlike that of Plato, is capable of being readily translated into every language under heaven; of one whose life was the embodiment of that virtue which Plato affirmed would entrance all hearts, if seen, and whose death throws the prison scenes of the Phædo utterly into the shade; of one, lastly, whose picture has arrested the admiring gaze of many who have believed it to be *only* a picture. Now, if we feel that the portraiture of Socrates in the pages of Plato involved the very highest exercise of the highest dramatic genius, and that the cause was no more than commensurate with the effect, it is a question which may well occupy the attention of a *philosopher*, how it came to pass that, in one of the obscurest periods of the history of an obscure people, — a people in the dregs of their literature and the lowest depths of superstitious dotage, so sublime a conception should have been so sublimely exhibited; how it was that the noblest truths found an oracle in the lips of the grossest ignorance, and the maxims of universal charity, advocates in the hearts of the most selfish of narrow-minded bigots; in a word, who could be the more than Plato (or rather the many, each more than Plato) who drew that radiant portrait, of which it may be truly said 'that a far greater than Socrates is there?'

THE GENIUS AND WRITINGS OF DESCARTES.*

If we except Bacon, there is no greater name connected with the revival of philosophy than that of Descartes; some would, perhaps, murmur even at this exception. But, at all events, there is no other; and, as has been justly said, the two, directly or indirectly, almost 'divide the philosophical history of the seventeenth century between them.'† To these men, more than to any other, is the world indebted for the demolition of venerable error — the emancipation from ancient prejudices — the breaking-up of those stereotyped forms of thought in which philosophy had so long been cast, and which, while it was confined to them, rendered all progress impossible. Both originated new 'Methods,' which, however unequal in their influence on the progress of science, have contributed immensely to stimulate the activity of the human

* 'Edinburgh Review,' Jan. 1852.

1. *Œuvres Complètes de Descartes.* Publiées par Victor Cousin. 8vo. 11 vols. Paris: 1824—1826.

2. *Fragments de Philosophie Cartésienne.* Par Victor Cousin. Paris: 12mo. Pp. 470. 1845.

3. *Œuvres de Descartes.* Nouvelle Edition, collationnée sur les meilleurs textes et précédée d'une introduction. Par M. Jules Simon. Paris: 1850. 12mo. Pp. 618. (Discours sur la Méthode, Méditations, Traité des Passions.)

4. *Discourse on the Method of rightly conducting the Reason, and seeking Truth in the Sciences.* By Descartes. Translated from the French, with an introduction. Edinburgh: 12mo. Pp. 118. 1850.

† Speaking of the philosophy of this century, M. Cousin says: 'Deux hommes l'ouvrent et la constituent, Bacon et Descartes.' —*Cour de Philosophie.*

mind, as well as to determine the direction of that activity.

The chief glory of Descartes consists not so much in the positive additions he made to human *knowledge*, — the fragments of truth which, tested by time, still remain undissolved amidst the ruins of his general system; nor even in his 'Method,' if we mean by that a system of rules for the prosecution of *all* science; but in the vast influence he exerted in the origination and development of modern philosophy*, and indirectly on all its subsequent history; in the important degree in which he contributed to emancipate the human mind from the yoke of authority; in the effects of his method as applied to *one* branch of science, that of the mind, in which he justly earned the title conferred upon him by Stewart; and in the perpetual corrective reaction, supplied in the *tendencies* of his philosophy, to the excesses of the sensational schools. The enormous space he occupies in the annals of subsequent speculation may be estimated by the fact (almost literally true) stated by M. Cousin, that from the era of the publication of the 'Meditations' (1637) to the end of the century, no philosophical work of any mark appeared that was not *for* Descartes or *against* him, or at least *about* him. Nor, lastly, amongst his merits, must we forget the beneficial influence he has exerted as a most robust thinker and a most admirable writer. This, after all, constitutes not the least of his claims to the admiration of mankind, and it is one he will never cease to possess. Since, probably, the most signal benefit conferred by metaphysics, is the *tonic* influence they exert in the discipline and development of the mind, — as a strenuous gymnastic for the faculties, an important instrument of education, — the value

* He was born in the year 1596 and died in 1650; he therefore lived at the critical period when the ancient philosophy was dying and the modern not yet born. Bacon and Descartes were made for the age, and the age for them.

of philosophical writings (paradoxical as it may sound) is not always to be measured by the amount of truth they embody. There are authors who, in spite of some enormous errors (supposing those errors to be either morally innocuous, or completely exploded,) are so imbued with vigorous thought, and distinguished by such mastery of expression, that they will do more to stimulate and invigorate the young than writings which attain a far nearer approximation to uniform truth, but which are unaccompanied by any of the *vis vivida* of genius. Among these will ever be reckoned Descartes; and the same may be said of Plato, Aristotle, and Bacon. But though the chief glories of Descartes consist in the points we have mentioned, it must not be considered that his actual contributions to human science were inconsiderable. He has certainly done more as a pioneer than as an architect, but still not a little even in the latter capacity; something in optics, and far more in pure mathematics and metaphysics. Let us not forget that, though the majority of his physical speculations lie, and have long lain, in utter ruin, he has immortalised himself as the founder of Algebraical Geometry.* He has also exhibited his power and originality as a mental analyst by many acute observations on our intellectual phenomena; and especially in so clearly discerning that the sole organon of all mental science consisted in a perpetual appeal to the *facts of consciousness.*

We propose in the present article to offer some observations on the principal features of Descartes' character, on the evolution of his philosophy as a system,

* Whatever the light he may have derived from the notable improvements in algebra effected by Vieta and Harriott, still that which peculiarly constitutes *the* step in the application of algebra to geometry — the method of co-ordinates and the expression of curves by its means, is incontestably his own. The subject of his imputed plagiarisms we shall briefly touch hereafter

and, lastly, on some of the chief doctrines of that system itself.

Never was the philosophic temperament more strongly marked than in Descartes, — scarcely ever so strongly. Though he played many parts in life, — was a traveller, a soldier, a man of the world, — he never really appeared but in one character, that of a philosopher; the dress was changed, but, let it be what it would, the *persona* was the same. That intense tendency to abstract thought, which procured him at the age of thirteen the name of 'The Young Philosopher,' never for a moment deserted him. Thus, though he spent his days in a far greater variety of scenes than usually vary the lot of a philosopher, and indulged prodigiously in locomotion, we know comparatively little about him, except as disclosed in that history of his thoughts, which is supplied in his own writings; — his life was a Meditation.

Even amidst the bustle of a camp in the time of war, or the ennui and dissipation of a soldier's life in peace, he was silently excogitating his philosophy. Like many other military men of that fighting age (who, however, were no philosophers), he seems to have been rather too philosophically indifferent with whom or against whom he bore arms, — for what cause, or whether for no cause at all. The simple fact is, however, that he was no soldier; he was simply a philosopher somewhat fantastically arrayed in Dugald Dalgetty's uniform.

This passion for philosophy absolutely possessed him; every thing else was 'stale, flat, and unprofitable,' in comparison. Having, fortunately for himself, a competency, he could abjure, and he seems most willingly to have abjured, not only all the rewards of ordinary ambition, but all the delights of society, in pursuit of his cherished occupation. How strongly, and in some respects how favourably, contrasted with Bacon, whom nature equally destined to be a philo-

sopher, but whose versatile ambition also made him almost all things besides! In order to meditate securely the great themes of his philosophy, Descartes, on one occasion, secluded himself for a long period so completely from all the world, that his friends knew not what had become of him; and on several other occasions (as he himself records) he assiduously concealed his precise 'whereabouts,' that his correspondents might not know where to address him. His chief reason for exiling himself to Holland for so many years was, that he might pursue in comparative solitude, and in the enjoyment of intellectual freedom, his task of life-long abstraction.*

To judge of him from one particular trait, many men would think him very lazy and self-indulgent; — he used to lie very long in bed! But these hours were often spent in intense meditation; as he himself tells us, he found his imagination particularly active in that luxurious condition. Father Charlet, rector of the college at La Flêche, (so says one of his biographers,) had conceded to Descartes, amongst other *privileges*, that of lying long in bed, 'as well for reasons connected with health, as that he observed in him a mind naturally inclined to meditation.' Discerning instructor of youth! It was a *privilege* which the philosopher took care to enjoy all his life; and, if we may judge from the confessions of many other great men besides Descartes, — statesmen, philosophers, poets, — we may be justified in inferring that the couch, with its still midnight hours of sleepless musing, or its calm morning after sleep, has inspired as many brilliant and powerful thoughts, as it may have quenched in that sloth to which it has too often invited. Only let none of our young readers straight-

* He has recorded his grateful sense of the value of this asylum in one of his letters to Balzac. (Epistol., Part I. No. 102.) It contains also a lively description of the people among whom he sojourned.

way imitate — with the affectation too customary in other cases — one of the *questionable* traits of genius, and imagine that, because a philosopher may profitably lie long in bed, all one has to do is to lie very long in bed in order to be a philosopher.

Though a large portion of Descartes' life lacked not external variety, his biography, for the reasons already assigned, is, in fact, the life of 'une chose pensante.' Its most interesting facts — we might almost say all its essential facts — are given by himself in his letters, and in those charming fragments of mental autobiography which are scattered over his 'Method' and 'Meditations.' With one or two extracts from the former, which give the key to his whole interior history*, more clearly than could any words of ours, we will here present the reader: —

'I was nurtured to letters from my childhood; and, as I was led to believe that by their means we might acquire a clear and certain knowledge of all that is useful in life, I had an extreme desire to attain proficiency therein. But as soon as I had completed all that course of study, at the termination of which one is usually admitted into the rank of the "learned," I entirely changed my opinion; for I found myself embarrassed with so many doubts and errors, that, as it appeared to me, I had derived no other benefit from the pursuit of knowledge than this — that I had thoroughly discovered my own ignorance. And yet I was in one of the most celebrated schools in Europe, where I thought that there ought to be learned men, if such there were in any spot on earth. I had learned there all that others had learned; nay, not contented with the s iences taught us, I had run through all the books (treating of such subjects as were esteemed the most curious and rare), which had by chance fallen into my hands. At the same time I knew the judgment which others formed of me; and did not see that they esteemed me inferior to my fellow-students, although there were already among these some who were destined to fill the places of our instructors. Lastly, our age appeared to me as flourishing and fertile in great minds as any which had preceded it; all which made me take the liberty of

* We have pleasure in pointing the attention of the reader to the ably executed translation of the 'Method' (prefaced with a brief introduction), the title of which will be found at the head of this Article. In the short extracts we have given, we have

judging of all other men by myself, and of thinking that there was no such *science* in the world, as I had been previously led to hope.'

After declaring his respect for various branches of science and literature, the languages, history, eloquence, poetry, mathematics, theology, and at the same time his dissatisfaction with them all—he thus speaks of *philosophy.*

'Of philosophy I shall only say, that seeing it had been cultivated by the most powerful minds during many ages, and that, nevertheless, no single thing is to be found undisputed, and, consequently, which is not doubtful, I had not sufficient presumption to hope for better success than others; and that, considering how many different opinions may be held touching one and the same thing, all maintained by learned men, while it is not possible that there should be more than one true, I regarded nearly as false every thing which was only *probable.* . . . For this reason, as soon as my age permitted me to escape from under my teachers, I quitted entirely the pursuit of learning, and resolving to seek no other science than that which might be found in myself, or rather in the great book of the world, I employed the rest of my youth in travel, in visiting courts and armies, in mingling with people of different humours and conditions, in collecting a varied experience, in making trial of myself in the situations in which fortune placed me, and in forming, perpetually, such judgments on what occurred as might be of advantage to me. . . . It is true that while employed only in considering the manners of other men, I scarcely found anything of which I felt certain, and observed scarcely less diversity than I had before remarked in the opinions of philosophers; so that the greatest advantage I drew from it was, that seeing many things, which, however extravagant and ridiculous they may seem to us, are, nevertheless, commonly received and approved by other great nations, I learned not to think too positively of that of which I had been persuaded only by example and by custom; and thus I gradually liberated myself from many errors which

---

used our own translation; not because we thought it better (unless it be as somewhat more literal), but because it was executed with a view to the possible requirements of this Article, long before the publication in question appeared. We are glad to find that the author proposes to add the translation of the 'Meditations' to that of the 'Method;' we would suggest that they should be accompanied by the 'Objections' and 'Replies.'

* * The 'Meditations' have since appeared.

have sufficient power to darken our natural light and incapacitate us from listening to reason. But after I had employed some years in thus studying the book of the world and in attempting to acquire some experience, I took one day a resolution of studying *myself*, and of employing all the force of my mind in determining those paths I ought to follow ; which succeeded much better, it appears to me, than if I had never quitted my country or my books.'

We have here indications of that intensity and ardour with which Descartes pursued his philosophical vocation. It must be added in justice, that it was the pursuit of philosophical *truth* which thus animated him. It was not the stimulus or the pleasure of intense thought,—not the luxury (for such it is to minds like his) of conscious activity of intellect,—still less the vanity of intellectual distinction which thus possessed him; he evidently sighed, thirsted, panted for scientific and philosophic *truth* amidst those doubts and perplexities in which a retrospect of all previous speculation and his own profound meditations had involved him. Curious enough, this desire in the earlier period of his history was so fervent, that it transiently wrought in him some of the usual effects of a more vulgar enthusiasm, and made his reason the dupe of his imagination. Thus he himself tells us, that on one occasion (after prolonged meditation in absolute solitude—a tolerably sufficient explanation of the phenomenon) he had three dreams, of so singular a character, that he could hardly avoid accepting them as an omen of success sent him from above! They occurred rather suspiciously, it is true, on a merry evening—St. Martin's Eve ; but he gravely assures us that he went to bed perfectly sober. In the ordinary sense he no doubt was; but, as he tells us that he retired to rest in a rapture of hope at the first glimpses of the 'wonderful philosophy' he was meditating, he was, no question, intellectually as tipsy as ever nitrous oxide could have made him. Not only was he willing to accept an omen of success from these three dreams,

but he superstitiously vowed a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Virgin at Loretto, if she would but graciously smile upon his efforts! 'Philosophy,' a malicious wit might say, 'has often had its dreams, and at those we do not wonder; but who could have suspected it of being so devout?'

It is also affirmed by his biographers, that when a youth in Germany he sought to gain an introduction to the Rosicrusians, *half* hoping that they were as profound as they professed to be. He was even in some danger from 'evil tongues,' on account of his imputed intimacy with these *illuminati*. But he assured his friends, that when sought they had been true to their character, and had remained invisible.

Descartes' intense thirst for philosophic truth is also manifested in the patience with which he listened to objections to any part of his system, come from what quarter they might, and the strenuousness with which he endeavoured to meet them. His formal commission to Father Mersenne and others to obtain the remarks and criticisms of the most celebrated men in Europe on the unpublished manuscript of the 'Meditations,' is highly creditable to him. These ample 'Objections,' and equally voluminous 'Replies,' fill considerably more than one volume out of the eleven, of which M. Cousin's edition of the entire works consists. But the same traits of character appear as strikingly in his letters.

Any applications for information from any person, introduced or not, seem to have met with a courteous reception, and an endeavour, at least, to satisfy the querist. His correspondence, in this point of view, places his character as a man and a philosopher in a very amiable light. He maintains an almost uniform urbanity and dignity even when assailed with unworthy reproaches. Sometimes, indeed, he indulges in a quiet contempt of his opponents, and sometimes in a tone of unworthy arrogance; but there is at least none of the insolent scurrility so characteristic of the

age. Only on one occasion do we recollect his dignity utterly failing him, and even then he contents himself with a transient sarcasm.*

But nothing proves more strongly Descartes' intense yearning for scientific truth—his desire for something *positive*—than that very scepticism (of which more hereafter) in which his philosophy originated. The reason of the initial 'doubt' itself,—the impatience with which he endured it, and the precipitancy with which he proceeded to fill the void,—prove clearly enough that the mind of Descartes was anything but that of a sceptic. The doubt itself was avowedly only a preliminary to establishing a system of certainty, and was dictated by the hope of it. When we consider how brief that interval of scepticism was; its *provisional* character, even while it lasted; the temporary apparatus of *quasi* convictions, which were to supply the convictions thus nominally displaced; how rapidly the several deductions from the first and only unanswerable proposition,—'Je pense, donc je suis,'—conveniently follow one another; how increasingly precarious to the generality of minds are the successive links of the chain; how accelerated the speed with which he advances from one dogma to another, and that too precisely as the conclusions themselves become more doubtful, and the matter of investigation more difficult, it is easy to see the true character of Descartes' mind; that, in reality, it was much more nearly allied to dogmatism than to scepticism. He who had resolved to doubt of every thing except his own existence,—even of his own body and its members, of all material objects, and of every other being but himself,—ended in implicitly receiving, by logical deductions of the most attenuated character, a series of most arbitrary and gratuitous assumptions in every department of philosophy. His theory of 'vor-

* 'Non est quod mittas cæteras ejus epistolas; habemus enim hic satis chartæ ad postremum usum; ejus vero literæ ad hoc unum usui esse possunt.' (*Epist.* pars II. p. 214.)

tices;' the notion that the essence of matter is extension, and that *therefore* there is a universal *plenum;* that the *seat* of the soul is unquestionably the *conarion*, or pineal gland, for which his reasons are most exquisite; that animals are destitute of all intelligence, and mere automata; that, had God so pleased, two and two might not have made four, and the three angles of a triangle have been *not* equal to two right angles, sufficiently prove that with him to believe was still more easy than to doubt.* Well might D'Alembert (as cited by Stewart) say, that he 'began by believing nothing, and ended with believing every thing.'† He took revenge for his transient fit of scepticism by a subsequent most voracious dogmatism. In the former condition he was like a great boa constrictor in a state of inanition;—his throat looks as if it could swallow nothing; but no sooner does he begin to eat, than down go stags and goats,—horns and all!

Nothing is more evident, however, than that he was truly animated, both during his too doubtful 'doubts' and amidst all his sincere presumptions, by a most cordial and consuming thirst for *truth.* It

* The reader may see in how concise a manner he disposes of some of the greatest mysteries of philosophy in one single letter. (Part I. p. 100.) 'Responsio ad quatuor quæstiones. 1. De causâ caloris in animalibus. 2. De causâ febris, ejusque horrore. 3. De spiritibus animalibus. 4. De causâ somni.' On the last he observes that he thinks sleep is occasioned by a less active flow of 'animal spirits' into the brain, so as to fail to fill all its 'pores'; just as we see the sails of a ship collapse when the wind falls. It is not without reason that he closes by expressing a fear lest the tediousness of his letter should occasion sleep rather than account for it; though, as he is writing 'ad magnatem quendam,' he winds up like a courtier, by saying 'that *he* can never feel sleepy when he hopes he can do anything to gratify his Excellency.'

† D'Alembert does in effect say this; yet it must in fairness be added that the tone of the sentence, 'S'il a fini par croire tout expliquer, il a du moins commencé par douter de tout,' is apologetic, and occurs in the midst of an apology. So much depends on the very *turn* of a sentence!

was the wish, whether wisely or unwisely prosecuted, to lay a more solid foundation of opinions that led him to his transient scepticism; he felt nothing of what the genuine sceptic ever feels, — a love of doubt itself, — a prejudice in *favour* of the '*nothing true.*'

We heartily wish it could be added that Descartes' evidently intense desire of philosophic truth for himself was accompanied by an equal courage and frankness in proclaiming it to the world. But we fear it must be said that his moral greatness was somewhat behind his intellectual. He was deficient in magnanimity. Not only was there a little envy and jealousy of the fame of others, and now and then a little confusion as to the 'meum' and 'tuum' in asserting his claims to inventions and discoveries (as seen in the cases of Snellius and Pascal); but there was, and that throughout all his life, a dread of authority and a professed deference to its decisions amounting to pusillanimity. There cannot be a greater contrast than that between the independence of intellectual authority which is characteristic of his philosophy, and for which it is now so highly eulogised, and the obsequiousness of its author. He was at once the most audacious and the most timid of innovators. Like the ostrich, he deposited his eggs in the sand, and left it to the sun to hatch them. Nothing can be more absolute than his declaration of submission to the decrees of the Church, in the closing paragraph of his 'Principia'; — 'Nihil affirmo; sed hæc omnia Ecclesiæ Catholicæ auctoritati . . . submitto.' A similar deprecatory tone is found in his 'Meditations,' and in many passages of his letters; often even an unworthy alacrity in adopting any alterations or verbal compromises which may satisfy the criticism of bigotry.

Early taught caution by the persecution of Galileo, he suppressed, for a while, his system of the world; and when he did publish his physics, temporised on

the subject of the Copernican theory with even a ludicrous vacillation: he was determined that the earth should move, and equally determined that it should stand still; it was to move to please himself, and it was to stand still to please the Church! Hence, also, his continual assertion of his purely hypothetical solutions of phenomena, when he evidently believes them the true ones. In short, he did as all men in the same predicament are apt to do; practised the customary arts of 'reserve in the communication of knowledge,' whether 'religious,' or 'philosophical;' used venerable and familiar terms with an esoteric meaning; availed himself of little artifices of verbal conjuration, and affirmed in the letter what he denied in the spirit. Nothing is more amusing than the prudential directions to Regius, who had embraced Cartesian principles, and felt inclined, as Descartes thought, to hazard a too violent opposition to the venerable errors of the older philosophy*; nor is it possible to read, without a smile, perhaps it was not written without one, his submissive letter to the Sorbonne (prefixed to the 'Meditations'), in which he begs their patronage of a philosophy which, if fairly followed out, must blow them into the air. It is as though he had begged their kind acceptance of a small barrel of gunpowder, with a lighted match already attached to it.

Something, no doubt, is to be pardoned to his extreme love of quiet — the jealousy with which he regarded whatever threatened to break in upon that 'otium et tranquillitas,' for which he sought Holland,

* 'Vellem etiam quam maxime, ut nullas unquam novas opiniones proponeres, sed antiquis omnibus nomine tenus retentis, novas tantum rationes afferres; quod nemo posset reprehendere; et qui tuas rationes recte caperent, sponte iis ea quæ velles intelligi concluderent; ut de ipsis formis substantialibus, et qualitatibus realibus, quid opus tibi fuit eas palam rejicere? nunquid meministi me in meteoris editionis gallicæ expressissimis verbis monuisse ipsas nullomodo à me rejici, aut negari, sed tantummodo non requiri ad rationes meas explicandas?'

and of which he makes such frequent mention in his letters. But this cannot excuse his comparative apathy as to the progress of what he deemed truth, and still less his unmanly suppression or compromise of it when distasteful to those in authority. He never seems to have got over the panic caused by the persecution of Galileo.

It is true that the persecutions which prompt unworthy and pusillanimous subterfuges on the part of philosophy, are infinitely more odious than the subterfuges themselves. Still it is humiliating to reflect that while almost any religion, however false, can animate multitudes of its votaries with inflexible courage, to suffer for it — even to die for it, — scarcely any philosophy, however true, will inspire an equal enthusiasm. The apparent paradox, however, is easily explained; religion enters far more deeply into the human heart, and takes far stronger hold of its affections than philosophy ever did, will, or can; so that even religious error has usually more power to move human nature than philosophical truth. Hence, also, we may see the extreme folly of that conflict in which a false philosophy sometimes ventures to engage with religion, which it tauntingly pledges itself to overthrow and explode! Until philosophy can inspire her votaries with more magnanimity, even false religions would have little to fear even from a true philosophy; how much less has true religion from false philosophy! It is instructive to reflect that while the menace of persecution had power to make Galileo recant what he knew to be a most certain truth, and Descartes to refrain from expressing it, its fiercest fury has often been expended in vain on the votaries of the most abject superstition; simply because, superstition as it may be, it can do what philosophy rarely does — take fast hold of man's conscience.

Descartes' knowledge and reading were extensive, but certainly far less so than those of many of his contemporaries — Bacon for example. Yet they were

greater than he cared to show; and it must be added that this reserve was not solely the effect of modesty. The benefits which he derived from authors and books he had not always the ingenuousness to acknowledge. It is true indeed that, like most original and inventive minds, he took greater delight in meditation than in acquisition: in thinking for himself than in learning what others have thought. But there can be little doubt that Descartes was unduly anxious to impress the world with the idea of his self-derived intellectual wealth; a trait which was connected, as Leibnitz has repeatedly remarked, with a niggardly concession or even envious depreciation of the merits of others. When Pascal made his celebrated experiment in relation to the barometer, Descartes half insinuated he had first suggested it, declared he had long meditated it, and had *intended* to institute it.

This jealous disposition is still more painfully evident in the case of Snellius, whose title to the discovery of the constancy of the ratio of the refractive index for the same medium, is undoubted; Descartes having merely substituted the sines of the angles of incidence and refraction for a less convenient measure of those angles. Yet his name is not mentioned by Descartes when treating this subject, and it is a positive blot on his memory. The high honour of having bridged over the gulf between Algebra and Geometry must, as already said, be conceded to him; yet, whether his purely algebraical discoveries were not, to a great extent, due to Harriott remains a disputed point. 'The charge,' says Hallam, 'of plagiarism from Harriott was brought against Descartes in his lifetime: Roberval, when an English gentleman showed him the Artis Analyticæ Praxis, exclaimed eagerly, "Il l'a vu! Il l'a vu!" It is also a very suspicious circumstance, if true, as it appears to be, that Descartes was in England the year (1631) that Harriott's work appeared. Carcavi, a friend of Roberval, in a letter to Descartes in 1649, plainly intimates to him that he

has only copied Harriott as to the nature of equations. (*Œuvres des Descartes*, vol. x. p. 373.) To this accusation Descartes made no reply.'

When charged with plagiarism, he so frequently affirmed ignorance of what had been written by others, that it could not but engender suspicion. Of Vieta, he said he had read little till after he had completed his own discoveries; of Galileo's writings, he hinted much the same. Descartes was happy in his discoveries; perhaps happy in what he read; but pre-eminently happy in what he did *not* read. It has been supposed by many, that an unworthy jealousy of Bacon is indicated in his comparative silence in relation to his great contemporary; but the suspicion seems to us unjust. So slight, however, are his references that M. Thomas, in his 'Eloge,' insinuates, on some unknown authorities, that Descartes had never perused the writings of Bacon; and Stewart, while combating the improbability of the assertion, himself shows that either he had not read the Letters or had forgotten Descartes' mention of Bacon in them; 'a solitary' mention of him, as some say: but, in fact, there are two references at least.*

Both of the letters containing them are to Father Mersenne. From these it is evident that Descartes was acquainted with the philosophical writings of Bacon, and in neither reference does there appear anything of the spirit of depreciation. The former is, indeed, complimentary. In reply to his correspondent's wish to be told 'modum aliquem faciendi experimenta utilia,' Descartes says,—'Ad quod, nihil est quod dicam post Verulamium qui *hac de re scripsit*, nisi,' &c. Still, acquitting him of all jealousy in this instance, and further acknowledging that the vast interval between Bacon's system and his own (of which by and by) diminished the chances of frequent references, it is impossible not to feel that such a

* Epist. tom. ii. Nos. 65. 67.

mind as that of Descartes could not peruse such a writer as Bacon without being deeply impressed with the amplitude of his stupendous genius, and that the scanty and meagre references to him are inadequate and ungraceful expressions of admiration. Something more ardent would assuredly have broken from a more frank and genial nature. How nobly cordial is the tone in which another great French pholosopher, D'Alembert, speaks of Bacon. 'When one considers,' says he, 'the sound and enlarged views of this great man, the multitude of the objects to which his mind was turned and the boldness of his style, which unites the most sublime images with the most rigorous precision, one is disposed to regard him as the greatest, the most universal, and the most eloquent of philosophers.'

As Hallam has remarked, it is a formidable list of plagiarisms with which Leibnitz has taxed Descartes. The above critic has cited a part of the passage. The whole may be found in Leibnitzii Opera, tom. v. pp. 393—394. He sums up the long enumeration with the somewhat too severe remark, 'Descartes, as was long ago observed by learned men, and as is but too evident from his epistles, was an immoderate despiser of others, and, in his thirst for fame, did not abstain from artifices which it is impossible to regard as generous.' But it is an ungrateful subject, and we care not to dwell on it. In Hallam *, the reader will find a characteristically calm and equitable statement of the imputed delinquencies. Mackintosh, too, has in an early volume of this Journal † touched on this subject in that comprehensive spirit of humanity which may well entitle him to be called the Melancthon of philosophical critics. 'Descartes,' says he, was among the *unreading* 'philosophers, who avoided books, lest they might stand between them and nature.' Nor must we in justice forget that when one asked Descartes, while pursuing his anatomical studies,

* Vol. iii. pp. 266—269.; and vol. iv. pp. 16—20.
† Vol. xxvii. p. 227.

where was his library? the philosopher contented himself with showing the querist a calf under dissection. It is also true, that when coincidences were pointed out between himself and others, he sometimes frankly acknowledged them. Thus he says to one of his correspondents, 'I am particularly obliged to you for those passages of Augustine, which serve to sustain my opinions by his authority. Some of my friends have pointed them out before, and I exceedingly rejoice that my thoughts should coincide with those of so pious and so eminent a man. For I am a *stranger to the dispositions of those who are anxious that their opinions should seem new.*' Few readers of Descartes, however, will agree in this last estimate of his character, or doubt that that great ethical text, 'Know thyself,' might still have been profitably pondered by him.

The style of Descartes has an indescribable charm; its perspicuity, whether he wrote in French or Latin, is even wonderful. His mastery of his native language, at least for philosophical purposes, the *netteté* of his style (the more remarkable as Pascal had not yet fully developed the resources of the French tongue and consecrated it to the uses of literature), render his compositions even now very agreeable reading. But the great charm, unquestionably, whether of his Latin or his French, is its inimitable clearness; and *that* is the effect of the clearness with which he usually thought. Not that we can deny (paradoxical though it may seem) that there is, as was the case with Locke, frequent unsteadiness in the use of particular terms at different times, and discrepant statements in different parts of his writings; and hence the disputes as to what was his precise theory of 'innate ideas,' as well as in relation to other subjects. This oscillation seems in part due to the fact that in the successive efforts to illustrate and explain his views, he sometimes modified them, without always having the magnanimity to say so; in part to his natural

anxiety to diminish as much as possible the apparent interval between himself and his various critics—a disposition which often carries him further than perfect ingenuousness will warrant; and in part to that more deliberate and culpable spirit of compromise which his timidity dictated, and on which we have already animadverted. Still, for the most part, taking any single statement, all is lucid; the medium of expression is, as it ought to be, of most pure transparency. However deep down the thoughts may lie, the reader sees them as at the bottom of a clear stream. However abstract the subject, there is none of that haze and vagueness which we find in so many metaphysicians, especially of modern date; and which continually compel the reader to doubt whether he has got the author's meaning or not; or, what is even worse, partially to superinduce, as he reads on, a meaning of his own on the mysterious symbols. This last process soon involves the mind in an impenetrable cloud; it being impossible to compound a clear sense out of a book to which we contribute only a half-meaning of our own, and the author scarcely any meaning at all. One meets with no obstacle of this kind in Descartes; he does not give the unhappy reader eggs to hatch, or rather, egg-shaped stones, which the wretch is to sit upon in hopes of successful incubation. We often do not agree with him; we often doubt whether he agrees with himself; but whether we agree with him or not, we at least know in each single case what he *means*. However fallacious may be his criterion that 'whatever is clearly and distinctly conceived must be true,' it is evident that the reflex operation of this maxim on his own mind—the constant *attempt* to attain definiteness of conception—gave correspondent sharpness of outline to his expression; and to this, conjoined no doubt with the eminently mathematical character and habits of his intellect, must we attribute the admirable lucidity of his style. It shows us what can be done even for the

development of the most abstruse thoughts; and he who would be a great metaphysical writer would do well to revolve frequently the writings of Descartes.* D'Alembert's description of the highest merit of philosophical style exactly applies to that of Descartes: 'Le premier devoir de la philosophie est d'instruire, et ce n'est qu'en instruisant qu'elle peut plaire; son éloquence est la précision.'

But we must hasten to give some brief account of the correlation and concatenation of the chief principles of Descartes' philosophical system. In constructing that system he resolved, as we have seen, to begin

* It is much to the credit of the French that they seem fully disposed to do justice to the writings of this — perhaps the greatest of their philosophers. The writings of Descartes have lately inspired or rather recovered a vivid interest, partly a cause, partly an effect of the salutary reaction from the long and deplorable ascendancy of the sensational philosophy: a happy omen! Within the last thirty years some of his most important works, namely, his 'Method' and his 'Meditations,' have been repeatedly reprinted. A neat little edition of the former, with a biographical preface, was published in 1824, and of the latter in 1825. Lately has appeared a cheap but handsome reprint of the 'Method' and the 'Meditations,' together with the 'Objections' and 'Réponses' elicited by the latter, with an able introduction by M. J. Simon; and as far as the metaphysical works of Descartes are concerned, he who possesses these may be said to possess all. Of him as well as of many of the voluminous philosophers of that age, it may be said that a large portion of their 'opera omnia' consists of little else than a repetition of the same thoughts. Thus, in Descartes' 'Letters' we perpetually find the same matter as in his 'Method' and the 'Meditations,' the latter being itself little more than an expansion of the former. The 'Method' was written originally in French, the 'Meditations' in Latin.

But for those who would wish to possess the entire writings of this celebrated philosopher, the admirable edition of M. Cousin, in eleven vols. 8vo. leaves nothing to be desired. There, all that Descartes wrote is presented in the *vernacular*; his Latin treatises are admirably translated; indeed the most important of these were executed under the eye and with the corrections of Descartes himself. This edition is a worthy monument of respect from one distinguished philosopher to the memory of another.

absolutely *de novo;* and not merely to doubt, but to consider *pro tempore* as *false*, every thing except that of which it was not possible that he should even doubt whether he ever *could* doubt — namely, his own consciousness. Hence his celebrated 'Cogito, ergò sum;' 'je pense, donc je suis;' not an enthymeme, as he truly replied to Gassendi, of which the suppressed premise was 'every thing that *thinks, exists;*' but merely a statement of the fact of the consciousness of his existence as involved in the consciousness of his thinking. Of this fact it is impossible to doubt, for even to doubt is to think; and to doubt that we think is still only to think that perhaps we do *not* think. Therefore it still remains true; 'Je pense, donc je suis;' or as Augustin puts it, not less epigrammatically than Descartes, in a passage often cited by his critics, 'Si enim fallor, sum; nam qui non est, utiquè nec falli potest; ac per hoc, sum, si fallor.'

And even if it be supposed (as Descartes says), that there is no such thing as an external world; no such things as our bodies and their organs; that when we flatter ourselves we are awake, we think so with as little reason as when, in sleep, we *fancy* that we are, and thus imagine the illusory, yet often as vivid, phenomena, to be really external to us; still these *thoughts*, these *dreams* are real at all events; and *that* is real which is conscious of them. Thus then the philosopher, after much toil and profound meditation, has arrived at the conclusion that he *is*, for he *thinks*. 'Cogito, ergò sum;' a doughty achievement and worthy of philosophy; though men, not metaphysicians, will suspect that they had already arrived at the same conclusion without any philosophy at all. It is Descartes' *πῦν στῶ*, the starting point of all his philosophy.

But though this was solid ground, it was, it must be confessed, a narrow space of certainty on which to erect a philosophy. Of all else that he had believed, he deliberately resolved that he might not only doubt,

but that all was to be held false till strictly proved; an excess of paradox with which Gassendi does not fail to twit him, since it was sufficient to regard previous opinions as uncertain till proved: to regard them as false rather than true was, instead of laying aside *all* prejudices, to exchange an old prejudice for a new one.

For our own parts we *doubt* whether it was possible for Descartes to reduce himself even to a state of genuine *doubt* as to his previous conceptions; or regard a material universe, external objects, all other beings like himself, his own body, and its organs, as possible illusions, and the God he had from childhood believed in, as possibly a malignant deceiver. However, Descartes thinks otherwise, and resolves *pro tempore* that he will doubt of all these; clandestinely retaining, it must be remembered, a provisional code of maxims, by which, during his sojourn in the 'interlunar' cave of his scepticism, he is resolved to act as all the rest of the world acted;—a fact which may well lead one to suspect, with Gassendi, that the doubt was not so sincere as he supposed. He would have done well to include among his doubts, a doubt as to whether he thoroughly doubted. It may be said perhaps, that he resolved only to place himself in the exact situation of one who *did* thus doubt; but it is wonderful that a philosopher who so distinctly saw and so well expressed (in fact as vividly as Bacon) the inextricable nature of that web of mental convictions and impressions which our whole life—from periods long anterior to the dawn of reflection—has been weaving for us, did not doubt whether a man *could* thus denude himself of his past beliefs, and coolly act as if he still doubted. That Descartes never doubted that he could, if he so pleased, be sure that he doubted of every thing except his own existence, and then construct his system in a condition of self-induced scepticism, was itself a proof of confidence and dogmatism far more striking than were the alleged doubts

themselves of the reality of the voluntary sceptcism. The notion that he could at once thus strip himself of all prejudices, was itself a prejudice: of a philosopher it is true, but a prejudice for all that. Of all the deceptive 'illusions of the race,' the *idola tribûs*, not the least amusing is the illusion which each man is apt to feel, that *he* is free from them. When a man says that he will denude himself of all belief in what *may* be but the *illusions* of his past experience, until he has philosophically deduced that they are *not* illusions, it is much as if he were to say that he would strip himself of his skin for a quarter of an hour or so, just in order to examine what would be his sensations without that integument! The one feat would be just as practicable as the other.

However immovable the 'Cogito, ergò sum,' the point from which Descartes' philosophy commences, many affirm that it is also the point which terminates it; nothing, they say, as to the existence of anything but 'the thing that *thinks*, and therefore is,' being to be proved by Descartes' philosophy. He opines differently; and after laying down as a *criterion* of truth 'that the things which we conceive very clearly and distinctly are all true,'* he proceeds thus: '*I*, who am conscious that I am an imperfect and finite being, find in myself a distinct and clear idea of a being absolutely perfect and infinite, and hence conclude' (in modes which we shall presently consider) 'the actual existence of such a being as necessarily involved in the idea of his existence.' Next,—

As veracity is among the perfections of this perfect being, He could not have permitted us to be the victims of deception or exist amidst a system of illusions; hence, the information of our senses, and the conviction of the presence of other beings besides ourselves, may be trusted; and thus we are at last at liberty to believe that there *is* an external world.—Now it has

* La Methode, Quatrième Partie.

been well remarked by critics, both contemporaneous and subsequent, that there is here a vicious circle; for having first made man dependent on the veracity of his faculties for the idea of the divine existence, he now makes the divine perfections the proof of the veracity of our faculties. There is in this reasoning also, as M. Cousin has well remarked, both a 'paralogisme' and an 'anachronisme;' the conviction of an external world is at least as much entitled to be esteemed intuitive as the conviction of the divine existence; it is 'plus voisine du point de départ de la pensée; elle est et plus immédiate et plus profonde.' Nay, further, multitudes will think that the latter conviction is at all events *connected* with the prior, or at least simultaneous, conviction of an external world. They will say, with Gassendi, that there is some reason to doubt whether M. Descartes himself had so completely insulated himself, during his state of provisional scepticism, as to be competent to declare with absolute certainty that his idea of God was in no degree dependent, in its actual development at least, upon those previous life-long impressions he had had (however faint!), that there was somehow such a thing as an external world; an external world which, nevertheless, waits to exist for *him*, till he can say that the idea of God is wholly independent of it, and would not only have *been*, but would as clearly have been *seen* to be, without it. For if the external world be necessary only to the *development* of the idea of God, then its existence is already anticipated even in the very premises which are to prove it.

Descartes may answer that he *is* thus certain that he has not unconsciously assumed anything from his previous mental history; and that his ancient convictions of the external world had nothing to do with either the origination or development of the idea of God and his perfections. The speculators, however, who are not so plenarily convinced of this, must content themselves with congratulating him that *he* may

now believe in *their* existence, but that *they*, so long as they have no other than his principles of reasoning to trust to, must doubt of *his;* that to them the external world still waits to be created.

Most, however, will content themselves, along with M. Cousin, by saying that the conviction of an external world does not stand in need of being proved by so circuitous a route, and by such very difficult feats of abstraction. They will even affirm that, as far as they are capable of judging, they fancy they see in mankind tolerably strong impressions of an external world a little before there are any traces of a conviction of the existence of God, whether more or less distinct; in fact, as soon as children are capable of *feeling*, and long before they are capable of *saying*, 'Je pense, donc je suis.'

This we admit *proves* nothing; since, as Descartes may say, the irresistible conviction of an external world would not prove there *was* an external world: only then it must be said that when the proof at last comes, that there *is* an external world, it will merely prove what is already an *irresistible conviction;* and a proof, which proves only *that*, will be supposed by most philosophers a little too late and somewhat superfluous.

Having thus, during his temporary scepticism as to whether there be an external world, obtained the premises for proving it, (slyly filching, however, from that external world during the process those material symbols, words, — by which he carries on his processes of thought, — and recording them at the same instant, with material pen, ink, and paper,) Descartes henceforth considers that he may verily admit that there are other beings like himself, and that the impressions of his senses in relation to the material universe may be depended upon; a conclusion, again, which the world in general is disposed to arrive at without any logic at all, and which even philosophers are now very much disposed to adopt, not as a conclu-

sion of any logic, but as a principle to be taken for granted; not to be proved by any philosophy, but one of the foundation stones of all philosophy: so that perhaps philosophers themselves will, in this respect at least, very soon be as wise as those who are none.

It will be seen from all this, that, however this great philosopher's ratiocination may, in fact, be doubted by the rest of mankind, the whole is a remarkable example of *system;* it proceeds from the fewest and most elementary principles, and is closely concatenated throughout. Thus it is with all his metaphysical philosophy at least; it was characteristic of the strictly analytic and deductive quality of his intellect. His metaphysics obviously form one *fabric;* consistent, granting his premises, however it may be doubted whether such premises can be granted. But too certain it is, that as our philosopher goes on, the demands on our faith become stronger and stronger, and the transition from link to link in the chain more and more precarious; till at last when we get to his physics—his exploded 'vortices' and his 'automatic brutes,' 'his animal spirits' and his mechanical physiology,—we feel that we have but the bare word of a philosopher to trust to; and how little *that* imports, we fear the history of hypothesis too abundantly declares. Little, in fact, remains undisputed, even of the metaphysical structure he built, except the celebrated corner-stone—'Je pense, donc je suis.' On that point, as on a pivot, the speculator may revolve for ever.

In entire consistency with the *à priori* character of Descartes' metaphysical philosophy, were the predominant features of his system of physics: nay, as he flattered himself, the latter flowed in a series of unbroken deductions from the principles of the former. But, at all events, it was avowedly an attempt to deduce *effects* from *causes;* an investigation of what must be, not what is; the tracking of a stream from its fountain, not of a fountain from the stream. It is

here that his philosophy comes into the sharpest collision with that of Bacon. Not that Descartes discarded experiment; he even thought that it would be more and more necessary to appeal to it at every stage in the progress of science. But into this point we will not further enter till we come briefly to characterise the comparative merits of the two systems, both of which involve important principles, equally necessary, though necessary in unequal proportions, to complete an unexceptionable apparatus of scientific discovery;—to equip such a creature as man with a perfect 'method.' Descartes' system of physics, though often ingenious and subtle, and often profoundly suggestive, was just such a failure as might be expected when a merely mortal mind attempted to project, from a few *à priori* principles, assumed as facts of consciousness, the entire system of the universe; to evolve by logical concatenation what was the mode in which suns, planets, water, air, light, minerals, plants, animals—as to the last, however, he admits, we require ample experiments, — *must* have been, or at all events *may* have been, successively constituted. He says,

'I have ever remained firm in my resolution of supposing no other principle than that I have employed in demonstrating the existence of God and the soul, and of receiving nothing for true which did not appear more clear and certain than the demonstrations of geometers had previously appeared; nevertheless, I venture to say that I have not only found the means of satisfying myself in a very little time, touching *all* the principal difficulties of which philosophy customarily treats; but also that I have remarked certain laws, which God has so established in nature and of which he has impressed such notions on our souls, that after having sufficiently reflected on them, we shall no longer doubt that they have been exactly observed in all which exists or has been created in the world.'—*Method*, p. 5.

The sublime audacity of the attempt almost makes us forget, for a moment, its presumption; but as we reflect on the immense accumulations of a score of sciences (half of them born since Descartes' day), and

still how imperfectly,—separately or conjointly,—they unlock the mysteries of nature; how little man yet knows, compared with what remains to be known by patient 'interpretation,'—we are soon recalled to amazement rather at the temerity than the courage of the philosopher. How little, we are ready to exclaim, can even the mind of a Descartes 'anticipate' of the profundities of the universe; and how worthy is that cardinal maxim of Bacon of being deeply engraved on man's memory, as a lesson of humility as well as a truth in philosophy,—that the 'subtlety of nature far transcends the subtlety of either sense or intellect.' Viewed, in comparison with the actual accumulations of modern science, the rude mechanical, and still ruder chemical hypotheses, by which Descartes explains so many cosmical and physiological mysteries, appear even ludicrous. What must they be compared with the real exigencies of the case! It is thus he speaks of his first philosophical work which was to have been published with his 'Method;' but which the fate of Galileo made him suppress for a while. Never surely before were the several subjects of a philosophical treatise so curiously concatenated, nor so formidable an array of investigations undertaken, with such confidence, by a single mind. 'Fearing,' says he, 'my inability to get into my discourse all that I had in my thoughts, I simply undertook to explain at large my notions of light; then of adding something about the sun and fixed stars, because it proceeds from them; then of the heavens, because they transmit it; then of the planets, comets, and the earth, because they reflect it; and in particular of all the bodies which are on the earth, because they are coloured, or transparent, or luminous; and lastly of man, because he is the spectator of it.'*

Yet Descartes had no misgivings: it is thus he

* De La Methode, Cinquième Partie. 'The creation of man,' says Leibnitz, 'gave Descartes little trouble; but then it must be confessed that *his* man was very different from the *true*.'

speaks of his almost uniform success,—not indeed in always determining what were the modes in which the material universe, and its phenomena, *must* have been produced, but at least those by which a similar universe *could* have been produced.

'The order I pursued was this: first, I endeavoured to discover in general the principles or first causes of every thing which is or can be in the world, without considering any thing for this purpose, except God alone who has created it, nor deducing these principles from aught else than from certain seeds of truth which exist naturally in our souls. After that, I examined what would be the first and most ordinary effects which might be deduced from these causes; and it seems to me that I could hence discover heavens, stars, an earth, and even upon that earth, water, air, fire, minerals, and some other things which are the most common, most simple, and in consequence most easy to be known.'—*Method*, p. 5.

Richly amusing and surely as deeply instructive is the *naïveté* with which our metaphysical Columbus speaks of his voyage to Chaos:—'Totus nunc sum in Chao digerendo, ut ex eo lumen educam.'* The time for reducing it to order, and evolving the sun, moon, and stars from it, he afterwards modestly fixes at not less than two or three months; though he had at first hoped that 'one or two' might be sufficient. After all, he seems to deem this construction of the universe hardly more difficult than that of expounding it in such a way as, while 'conveying the truth,' should not 'strike any body's imagination with excess of wonder,'—truly a feat which we should think impossible—'nor be repugnant to received opinions,'—a feat at least equally so. Hard fate of the philosopher! to be obliged to reduce chaos to order, and yet never shock the chaos of received opinions.† Yet he meditates still more difficult things. He says (*Epist.* 67.):—

* Epist. 65. Pars II.

† 'Res mille simul considerandæ veniunt, ut modum inveniam quo verum dicendo, nullius imaginationem percellam, et opiniones jam receptos non impugnem.'

'Two or three months ago, I *pitched* myself into the depths of space—*me in cœlum penitissime conjeci*—and after I had *satisfied* myself as to the nature of the heavens, and the more conspicuous stars, and as to many other things which a few years ago I should have despaired of, I am now grown so audacious that I am going to investigate the *cause of the position of every fixed star.*'

In another letter, written about the same time, he condescends to remark that the subject of comets especially does demand a considerable amount of observations, and suggests that if a number of *amateurs* would furnish them, for the behoof of the deductive philosopher, as the data of his reasonings, it might be of admirable consequence.* In the same letter he exhibits a trait of despondency very unusual with him. He *almost* despairs (though he says he cannot refrain from allowing his mind to pursue the theme) of ascertaining the 'reasons for the position of every fixed star.' Reflecting on the (even now *somewhat* imperfect!) condition of sidereal astronomy, the reader will not wonder that Descartes had not *quite* exhausted this immeasurable subject; but we must regret it the more as he somewhat darkly observes,—though, as other letters show, no believer in astrology,—that the knowledge of this order of the stars is the 'key and foundation of the profoundest and most perfect science which men can attain respecting the material universe; because in virtue of it all the forms and essences of terrene bodies may be known

* Sir John Herschel enforces a somewhat similar suggestion of Lalande, in his admirable treatise on Astronomy. (Ch. xii. on 'Sidereal Astronomy.') It is well that the suggestion should be made, and if acted upon with conscientious diligence, might lead to important results. But we fear that little value can be attached to mere amateur efforts in any department of science. If observations and experiments are made with the requisite tact, care, and accuracy, then the observers must be, on *that* subject, philosophers, and cease to be amateurs; if not, by misleading into error they will be apt, as we say of slovenly servants, to make more work than they save; at all events, their work requires to be done over again, and the practical philosopher is just where he was.

à priori; whereas without that knowledge we must be contented to conjecture them *à posteriori* and in their effects;'—a dictum of *à priori* philosophy, which the reader must take for granted: though we certainly think that *when* man has discovered the reasons for the position of every fixed star (though not *because* he has done so), he will very probably be also in possession of those other mysteries, of which it is to be the key.

Amidst the natural insufficiencies and errors of Descartes' account of the modes in which the universe may be supposed to have been evolved, the idea of that evolution itself as a methodical progression—a development from the operation of vast mechanical, chemical, and other laws, in virtue of which the heavens and the earth naturally assumed their present form, is a conception the probability of which modern science is confirming; nor must the merit of entertaining it be grudgingly denied to Descartes, scanty and *jejune* as is the apparatus of causes by which he accounts for the all but infinite effects. It is an idea, however, which he timidly disclaims as the true theory of the subject; and affirms that he only thinks every thing *might* have been produced in such a course of development. We shall nevertheless concede him the honour he is anxious to divest himself of; for it is pretty certain that he is here merely *fencing.* His dread of the odium and persecution attendant upon alleged heterodoxy is constantly impelling him to say that he reasons *ex hypothesi,* when we can yet see that he believes the hypothesis to be fact. However, his words are, 'I do not wish it to be inferred from my reasonings, that the world has been created in the mode I have explained; for it is much more probable that God made it *from the beginning* such as it was to be.'

So confident is the tone in which Descartes speaks of his *à priori* system,—of the possible construction of a universe on his principles; so firm is his tread

over what he deems a 'pavement of adamant,' that we can hardly divest ourselves of the belief that he would have been willing to stand a test to which few even of the most sanguine of the children of philosophy would venture to submit. We have sometimes thought that if the Supreme were pleased to delegate for a while his omnipotence to some archangel, instructed to furnish the human fabricators of his universe with the elements of their hypotheses, (atoms and forces and combinations of these according to their own definition,) on condition of their attempting to realise their conceptions, — most of them would, at last, shrink from the proffer, lest the ignominy of utter failure should awaken shouts of laughter at the short-sightedness of their paper theories. We almost think that Descartes would boldly persevere, and still affirm, as he has done, that though he did not assert that the universe was really constructed in *his* way, (but probably in 'methods much more perfect,') yet that on his plan a very decent universe might be constructed notwithstanding; and it would probably require a few gyrations in one of his own 'vortices' thoroughly to undeceive him.

The presumption of this truly vast and profound intellect, its total misestimate of the exigencies of the great problems with which it had to deal, as tested by the *comparative* triviality of all the accumulations of science since his time, towards a *complete* solution of those problems, ought to be profoundly instructive; it proclaims the 'unsearchable wisdom of God,' and teaches us that modesty and humility are the chiefest ornaments of man.

D'Alembert has admirably urged every thing that can be said in palliation of the extravagances of Descartes' physics. Still, after all allowance for the age in which he wrote, we can hardly excuse the perfect gratuitousness of his hypotheses, and still less the confidence and presumption with which he trusted to them, after Bacon had traced those immortal lines,

— 'Modulos vero ineptos mundorum, et tanquam *similolas*, quas in philosophiis phantasiæ hominum extruxerunt, *omnino dissipandas* edicimus. Sciant itaque homines quantum intersit, *inter humanæ mentis idola et divinæ mentis ideas.*' Leibnitz, contrasting the professed deductive rigour and concatenated force of Descartes' reasonings, (his principles once admitted,) with the perfect gratuitousness of the pure assumptions interpolated at various points in the chain, remarks, 'Methodi ejus tantum *propositum* amo; nam quum *in rem præsentem* ventum est, ab illâ severitate prorsus remisit, et ad *hypotheses quasdam miras* ex abrupto delapsus est.' Of the facility with which Descartes can intrude an arbitrary *ex tempore* assumption, one of the most amusing examples is given in his explanation of the reasons of our seeing only one side of the moon. (*Principia*, pars III. art. 152.)

The favourite argument of the early Cartesians, that granting the first principles of their master, his *entire* philosophy, physical as well as metaphysical, follows by rigid deduction, is well ridiculed in the somewhat tedious philosophical romance, 'A Voyage to the World of Cartesius.' The truth is, that in his physical theories Descartes introduced a new principle just whenever he thought proper. Yet M. Bouillier, in his really eloquent Eloge, thinks that Descartes, having seen that the true theory of the universe was a problem of dynamics, 'a preparé Newton; il a fait peutêtre *plus* que Newton.' From this it might be supposed higher merit to see that there is a problem to be solved than to solve it!

But we must now proceed, as we proposed, to offer a few remarks on some of the principal points of the Cartesian philosophy. And first of 'innate ideas.'

One of the most voluminous, yet least satisfactory controversies ever carried on among men, is that respecting the origin of human knowledge and the genesis of our ideas. It is whimsical, at first sight,

that men should be more agreed about the deductions and results derived from their first principles than about the origin of the first principles themselves; that the house should be apparently stronger — though not really stronger — than the foundations. But it is for the usual reason; the foundations are out of sight. Men certainly believe that two and two make four; and that two straight lines will not inclose a space; but whether these things be 'generalisations from experience,' or assume the shape of axioms (as soon as the very terms are propounded and understood) in virtue of the very constitution of the mind itself, we see by the differences of opinion between even such men as Dr. Whewell and Mr. John Mill, that men are *not* agreed. That there is a material world, they are pretty unanimous; but why they think so, the most acute of them are still puzzled to say; they are also tolerably agreed that there is a God, but whence that idea is collected, or at all events whence it may be most unexceptionably and summarily inferred; whether it does not anticipate all demonstration; and if not, how it may be best demonstrated, — as to all this, metaphysicians are perpetually wrangling. In brief, in relation to much of philosophy, mankind seem exactly in the contrary position to that in which Epictetus represents them. 'The most important τοπος in philosophy,' says he, 'is that which respects the *application* of theorems, as for example, that we must not *lie;* the second, the demonstration of this; as for example, *why* we ought not to lie; and the third, the force of the demonstration itself;' or the *wherefore* of the *why*, as we may express it. 'But now,' continues he, 'wholly forsaking the *first*, we addict ourselves almost exclusively to the *last;* thus we lie fast enough; but how it may be demonstrated that we ought *not* to lie, we have at our fingers' ends.' It is just the contrary, with the greater part of the primary truths which we have above enumerated; they are embraced, but the grounds of them are disputed. It

is quite true that philosophers are as willing as ever to busy themselves supremely about the *why*, and the *why of the wherefore;* but, it appears, without the same success; for whereas we all believe and act on the belief that two and two make four, that there is a material world, and so forth, philosophers have not the *why* and the *wherefore* quite so much at their command.

Steady indeed must be the hand, bright the lamp, and keen the eye, which ventures to explore those depths of our nature in which our ideas originate. The stream of knowledge, however bright it sparkles at last in the sun, has its font in a dark mountain cave, and issues to the day through many a secret winding channel. Long before men are in a condition to investigate this obscure subject,—to analyse the sources of their knowledge,—the process (the result of many conditions) has been completed, and the products have become hopelessly complicated. The mind constituted so and so, having its own laws and conditions of thought independently of experience,• but also subjected to inevitable conditions of development from that experience, without which it would never develope at all, has been so perpetually and so equally under the influence of both sets of conditions, and that at periods long anterior to the dawn of reflection, that it is now no longer possible to ascertain with exact precision what is due to one and what to the other. If we could separate the two classes of influence, or rather if we could calculate not only their combined action, but their perpetual interaction; if, as mathematicians say, we could have one element vary and the other remain constant, and then the second vary, and the first remain constant, we should be able to see what is the effect of each in the total result. But this is impossible, and hence the difficulty. As Descartes has observed in the first sentence of his 'Principia,' in language which reminds one strongly of many passages in the 'Novum Organum,'—'Since we

were all once children, and in that condition formed various judgments concerning external objects, before we had arrived at the entire use of our reason, we are misled, by many prejudices, from the knowledge of the truth; from which prejudices it does not seem possible that we should be liberated, except by endeavouring to doubt, once for all in our lives, of all those things in which we may discover only the smallest suspicion of uncertainty.' The evil is more apparent than the remedy.

That there are the two above-mentioned distinct sets of conditions essential to the genesis and formation of our ideas, is now admitted with tolerable unanimity by philosophers; they, for the most part, alike maintain that the mind is originally constituted with its own fundamental laws of thought, which will inevitably cause it to develope only to certain effects —that is, by which it will develope thus and thus, and no otherwise,—and that at the same time a certain external influence, a contact with the outward world, is absolutely necessary,—without which it would never develope at all. On the one hand, as Professor De Morgan well puts it, 'Either we have ideas which we do *not* acquire from or by means of communication with the external world (experience, trial of our senses), or there is a power in the mind of acquiring a certainty and a generality which experience *alone* could not properly give;' and on the other hand, without that experience, the mind, for aught we know, would remain in perpetual slumber; this experience being, as far as either facts or consciousness can teach us, an invariable condition of the very first germination of thought. The external world presents us with abundant illustrations of an analogous union of similarly diverse conditions of development. Thus the internal structure of the flower is such that it will develope only to a certain colour, form, fragrance, and no other; yet without the sun, the wind, the dew, the rain, the soil, it will remain

in the germ. In like manner, the eye, were it otherwise constructed than it is, would not see, whatever the abundance of light; and were it constructed as it is, could see just as little if there were no light at all.

But in that complex result which flows from this perpetual, reciprocal, and inveterately entangled interaction of the diverse components of thought, it is almost hopeless to estimate the precise portion of effect due to either alone. The result itself becomes an insoluble compound. As in a product of chemical affinities, the separate elements have disappeared; the acid and alkali have alike vanished; the silica and the potash are no longer visible in the transparent crystal. And of the hopelessness which must probably attend every attempt at complete analysis, we may see proof in the fact that two such philosophers, even in our own day, as Dr. Whewell, and Mr. J. S. Mill, can yet come to such opposite conclusions as to the elements contributed severally by the internal constitution of the mind and its external experience, in the formation of our ideas of that class of truths which have been deemed (inasmuch as their contraries appear impossible) *necessary*. Dr. Whewell contends that even such a principle as the equal pressure of fluids in all directions—which, at first sight, seems so little self-evident, that the curious fact which it alone explains is still called the Hydrostatic Paradox—was not derived from experience in 'any exact sense of that phrase,'* but that the mind can pronounce on its *à priori* certainty. Similarly, he contends that the first law of motion, which was at first regarded as an enormous paradox—and even the law of definite proportions in chemistry (a fact fully established only in our own age), though historically collected from experience, yet have an evidence far beyond it;—the mind, in virtue of its own laws of thought, being competent to pronounce not only that these facts *are*,

* Phil. Ind. Sciences, vol. i. p. 203.

but *must* have been; that it attains 'a point of view from which it can pronounce that the first *might* certainly have been discovered independently of experience,'* and that the contrary of the second is '*inconceivable.*' Mr. Mill, on the other hand, contends, and with great force and ingenuity of argument, that even axioms are 'experimental truths,' 'generalisations from experience;' that however the mind may and does transmute into general truth the facts of experience, its constitution is not such that, except as taught by uniform experience, it would be entitled to pronounce even the proposition 'that two straight lines inclose a space' inconceivable! From no single instance, or a few instances, but from the universality of the experience, can the mind, it seems, in any case legitimately establish an axiom; in other words, that axioms are mere generalisations from experience.

We have said that Mr. Mill has argued with great force and ingenuity, but we cannot say with complete success. While, on the one hand, Dr. Whewell seems to us to have gone much too far, in reducing to *necessary* truths what assuredly very few philosophers will admit to be such, we are equally impressed with the conviction that Mr. Mill has gone too far on the other in exploding all 'necessary truths' whatsoever. But, at all events, whether Dr. Whewell or Mr. Mill be nearer the truth, their disputes are certainly most instructive; for when we find such men thus at variance, at this late period of metaphysical history, and in relation to truths so far from elementary, it may well seem an insuperable difficulty to separate, by any exact analysis, the precise *degrees* in which the mind itself and the outward conditions of its development have co-operated; and, least of all, in the earliest, most elementary, and therefore least *analysable* products of thought.

The reasons for which we cannot help suspecting

* Ibid. p. 213.

Mr. Mill's extreme view to be a paradox, we will take the liberty of briefly stating. He maintains that experience alone gives us even such a notion as that two straight lines, which intersect, will *never* meet again; on the other hand, mankind have certainly been disposed to call such propositions as these, *necessary* truths, and to distinguish them from the undoubted lessons of experience, where that experience has been quite as universal and uniform. We have always seen a cloudless sky blue, and the grass green; our experience of this has been equally early and unvarying with that which tells us that intersecting straight lines meet not again. Our feelings, therefore, in the two cases ought to be the same, if experience were all; but are they? Surely we all feel there is a totally different *state of mind* in the two cases: we can conceive the sky *might* have been green and the grass blue without difficulty; not so in the other case: we feel that there is a difference not only in the intensity, but in the *nature*, of the conviction. Without experience, indeed, we should have no thoughts of any of these things, — lines, clouds, sky, or grass; but the experience being equally invariable and uniform in all the supposed cases, we feel that the results are totally different. Why is this,—unless it be that the mind by its very constitution, has been able to do something in the one case which it could not do in the others? to transform the one fact into something more than a generalisation from experience, which something it calls a necessary truth?—Again: unless the mind, from the peculiarity of its own constitution, could thus deal with some of the materials submitted to it from without, how came it to *separate* some of the propositions among the many thus supposed to be wholly (and certainly equally) verified by experience into these so-called *necessary* and *contingent* truths? How came it to make any distinction between them? It is not sufficient, we think, to say that the experience in all the former cases was *more* uniform and

unvarying; for it cannot be more than *perfectly* uniform and unvarying. Such it often is in phenomena which we persist in regarding as what might possibly have been otherwise; — those of gravitation, for example. Now in all those cases in which the mind says, 'this is a necessary truth, it cannot be otherwise;' and 'this is a generalisation of an equally uniform experience, but it *might* have been otherwise;' how is it that the mind comes to make this distinction at all, and to *feel* it yet more strongly than it can *express* it? The very classification of truths into two such divisions (experience in either case being the same) is, we think, proof that the mind has the power of acquiring from experience what experience alone could never give. — Again: that the mind, at all events, is so constituted as that its laws, to a certain extent, are superior to experience, and can transform it, is, we think, evident from this very notion that there are propositions necessarily true, and not generalisations from experience. It is a very *general*, not to say *universal*, notion of the human mind. Now this notion is itself either derived from experience or not. If so derived, and the notion itself is true, then experience has contradicted itself; if so derived, and the notion is false, then experience has taught falsehood, and not truth; if *not* so derived, and the notion be false, the human mind is yet, it seems, so constituted as to subordinate objective experience to its own subjective laws; if not so derived, and the notion be true, the argument, of course, is fully decided. — Once more: since this notion has certainly been a necessary notion of the majority of minds (that is, they cannot help forming it), it appears that, if false, such minds, though they cannot attain *necessary* truth, are so constituted as necessarily to transform the truths of experience into falsehoods!

Again: according to Mr. Mill's theory, the definitions of mathematics are not mere abstractions, but are approximately true in fact, and have been derived

from actual figure and magnitude. This and this alone, he says, enables us to *apply* mathematical reasonings to the actual world. It is no doubt true that what *we* must call abstractions have been thus derived; and that we can apply mathematical reasoning to *physics* only because material forms indefinitely approximate to the definitions, so that in the application we may omit the inappreciable or unimportant difference between the definition and the reality. Yet, as he concedes that there are in fact *no* mathematical lines or surfaces,—*no* exact triangles, rectangles, or circles,—it seems as natural to say that these notions are formed as much in contradiction to experience as in conformity with it*; they are notions which ex-

* As to the origination of mathematical definitions, Mr. Hallam, in a long note inserted in the last edition of his valuable History of European Literature, has made a strenuous endeavour to rescue them from being mere creations of the mind, and contends that the generally admitted doctrine—admitted alike by Dr. Whewell and Mr. Mill—that there are and can be no such things in nature as perfect triangles, rectangles, or circles, is altogether an illusion; he affirms that if this were true, it would reduce the most certain of the sciences to a mere play of fancy; he therefore contends that its conclusions are true only because its definitions are perfectly capable of being realised as actual existences in the relations of pure space. Whether this be so or not, we cannot feel convinced that it applies to the point here in dispute; since it seems to us tolerably certain that it was not in *this* way that the mind arrived at the definitions of perfect mathematical figures; it was not because it chose to imagine them as really existing—it certainly *saw* none such—but because it was capable of framing them from the rude approximations which experience supplied. If Mr. Hallam had gone one step further—to the definitions, namely, of mathematical physics—we think that he would have seen that the solution (possible or not) was not needed. Not even he, we presume, will contend that the lever or the pulley of mechanical science; the rod perfectly inflexible, the cord perfectly flexible, and both imponderable, ever had an existence, or in a material world can be even conceivable. But we venture to recommend the entire note to the attention of our readers. It is a striking example, at all events, of the 'viridis senectus' which the venerable critic is enjoying; of the strenuous manner in which his mind still feels disposed to revolve problems

perience suggested, but which experience never realised; and surely this very tendency of the mind to separate from experience all that in fact interferes with the theoretic perfection of its definitions and ratiocination, affords an indication that, by its very constitution, it is so framed as to modify by its own peculiar laws the conceptions derived from experience.

Once more: we should like (we submit it without pretending more than a doubt) to have an intelligent solution of the following dilemma:—Taking the case of the 'intersecting right lines which, when produced, never meet,' we would ask, is it possible that minds should ever be constructed, such that they would not infer that, though produced ever so far, these lines would never meet? Either such minds could be constructed, or not; if they could, then that we form different notions is owing to the peculiar structure of our minds by which we arrive at a different conclusion from theirs; for the experience itself we suppose to be the same. If no such minds could be formed, then it appears that it is a universal condition of *all* minds that they *must* conclude some inferences from some facts of universal experience which they do *not* from others equally universal; that is, the laws of thought are such that we are necessarily led to believe that such and such things *could* not have been otherwise. —If Mr. Mill's reasoning be correct, then, for aught we *know*, we fear we must be warranted to say that there *may* be a number x, such that it cannot be increased, and a world in which two intersecting right lines may *possibly* meet again; for assuredly experience can disprove neither. We are also left to wonder at the universal presumption and inconsistency of the human race, not one of whom but would stake his life that there is no spot in the universe where two straight lines would inclose a space; and yet,

which are usually dismissed at a much earlier period of life. We congratulate him on this verdant *aftermath* of thought so late in the autumn of his days.

though experience has confirmed it no more than a thousand chemical facts which have been found equally uniform *here*, not a soul will pledge itself that these last will be found uniformly true in any world but this! We suspect it is something beyond experience which makes the whole race so confident in the one case — and so cautious in the other.

To us it seems most rational to believe that the suggestions of experience and the innate *capacities* of the mind itself alike conspire to render our thoughts such as we find them; the outward world ministering those materials without which the mind would be without any thoughts at all — wrapped in a perpetual slumber; and the mind itself so operating upon those materials as to give its conceptions their forms, and in many cases to transmute that which experience only gives as contingent into the absolute; as when, experience having told us that two straight lines intersecting and produced, *do* not meet, the mind superadds this — that they never *can*. But to say, in all cases, in what proportions these two conjoint sources of our knowledge contribute to the results — to make a perfect partition of their shares of influence — is, from the perpetual commingling of the two streams, which issue from their fountains at the same instant, and immediately afterwards flow on undivided, perhaps impossible. He who would make a perfect analysis of this must know more of the history of the mind than, from the mode in which it is developed, can ever be known.

Now in what sense did Descartes hold his celebrated doctrine of 'Innate Ideas?' Did he mean *thoughts*, or laws of thoughts; *notions*, coeval with the mind in date, congenital with its very faculties, inscribed, if we may use a metaphor (and, indeed, it is impossible on this subject to avoid metaphor), on the tablet of the mind itself, and which the mind consciously possesses from the earliest dawn of intelligence; or merely such a *constitution* of mind that, as its activity deve-

lopes itself, these fundamental notions are inevitably evolved? We believe, with Sir William Hamilton and other critics, that he really meant the latter. This appears from some of his own expressions in his reply to Hobbes' objections to the 'Meditations'; but more especially in his annotations on a certain 'Programma,' entitled 'Explicatio mentis humanæ,' which appeared in 1647, in which innate ideas were attacked. The annotations are prefaced by the letter No. 99. (Epist. Part I.), and are appended to it. Stewart has quoted a sentence or two from them in a note appended to his 'Dissertation on the History of Metaphysical Philosophy'; yet strong as they are, there are others at least equally strong.

One paragraph, the most pregnant sentences of which have already appeared in the 'Edinburgh Review'*, would have decided the controversy, had this been Descartes' only statement on the subject. The whole paragraph is as follows:—

'It does not seem,' says Descartes, 'that the author differs from me except in words; for when he says the mind is in no need of innate ideas, or notions, or axioms, and yet concedes the faculty of thinking (we must suppose natural or innate), he plainly affirms the same thing in fact, as I do, though in words he denies it. For I have never said or imagined that the mind is in need of innate ideas, if supposed to be something different from its faculty of thinking; but when I consider how many thoughts I have which proceeded not from external objects nor from the determination of my will, but solely from that *faculty* of thinking which is in me, these—in order that the ideas or notions which are the forms of those thoughts might be distinguished from others adventitious or manufactured—I have called innate, in the same sense in which we say that generosity is innate in some families, or that certain diseases (as the gout or the stone) are innate in others; not that the children of those families labour under such diseases in their mother's womb, but that they are born with a certain predisposition or faculty of contracting them.'

But the Programma and the annotations are well worthy of being translated entire.

* Vol. xxxvi. p. 236.

Most admirably has Sir W. Hamilton, in his recent edition of Reid, summed up the case in the following words *:—

'By innate ideas in general Descartes means simply the innate faculty we possess of forming or eliciting certain manifestations in consciousness (whether of necessary or contingent truths) on occasion of, but wholly different from, both the qualities of the reality affecting, and the movements of the organism affected; these manifestations or ideas being nothing else than states of the conscious substance itself. . . . I have no doubt that had he and Locke expressed themselves with the clearness and precision of Scotus, their opinions on this subject would have been found coincident both with each other and with the truth.' The want of steadiness, however, here referred to, is abundantly apparent in Descartes' writings.

We cannot deny that there are expressions (and still more in the writings of Descartes' defenders and successors) which would seem to imply a less reasonable doctrine, and which are fairly exposed to Locke's animadversions in his celebrated first book. Indeed, it is impossible to compare the different passages of Descartes on this and on other subjects, without suspecting (as already said) either that his philosophy somewhat drifted from its first moorings, but so slowly as to elude his own consciousness, or that he really modified, from time to time, his opinions, but had not the candour to avow it.

From the liability to misconstruction, or rather, certainty of it, it is to be regretted that the phrase 'innate ideas' should ever have been used by Descartes,

* Edition of Reid. 'On the Philosophy of Common Sense,' p. 782. When will this distinguished metaphysician give us the remainder of his valuable annotations, equally distinguished for acuteness and erudition? As it is, the volume is one of 'the curiosities of literature' in many senses; and not least in being a book of 914 closely printed pages, which leaves off in the middle of a sentence!

and still more that it should have been persisted in by subsequent philosophers in the long controversy to which it has led. The word 'ideas,' as otherwise employed by Descartes, (who, as Sir W. Hamilton has shown, with such a rare felicity of learning, wrested it to a perfectly novel acceptation,) naturally suggests not laws or capacities of thought, but thoughts themselves; not inevitable conditions of the formation of such and such notions, but the very *notions*. Seldom has anything more true or more amusing been uttered than the sentence in which the above writer closes his acute investigation into the successive degradations of meaning which the word 'ideas' has undergone from its old Platonic signification till at last, 'by a double blunder in philosophy and Greek,' it enters appropriately corrupted in the term *ideology*, as a name for a system of purely sensational philosophy. 'Word and thing,' says Sir William, '*idea* has been the *crux philosophorum* since Aristotle cursed it to the present day—τὰς δὲ ἰδέας χαιρέτω· τερετίσματα γάρ εἰσι.' We are not convinced that it would not even now be wise in metaphysicians to abstain from this unhappy term altogether.*

It is impossible, however, on metaphysical subjects to avoid sources of ambiguity, and consequently causes of controversy, from the fact, (necessary, but

* Whatever Descartes' *idea* of *ideas*, innate or otherwise, he was not (as Reid supposed) among those who believe them a *tertium quid* between the thinking mind and the external object. This is clear from many passages; and from none more so than from the following sentence in his letters (*Epist.* Part I. No. 115.); where he says, 'I think there is no other difference between the mind and 'its ideas than between a lump of wax and the different configurations of which it is susceptible.' But the whole passage is very curious and well worth the inspection of the student of Descartes; it also by implication contains the same views of innate ideas as those expressed in the preceding extracts. He says it seems to him that ideas are induced in the mind, 'partim ab objectis sensus afficientibus; partim ab impressionibus quæ in cerebro sunt, et partim etiam a dispositionibus, quæ in anima ipsa præcesserunt, atque a suæ voluntatis motibus.'

yet how humiliating,) that it is impossible to express a single truth in relation to mind—its constitution, faculties, phenomena,—without borrowing the aid of metaphorical language; language, in the first instance, not only figurative, but violently figurative. To 'weigh,' to 'ponder,' to 'judge,' 'memory,' 'imagination,' 'idea,' and so on through the whole metaphysical nomenclature, were originally metaphorical, and some have remained transparently metaphorical, in spite of long usage, through their whole history. Stewart somewhere complains that mental philosophers have so freely resorted to metaphor; forgetting what yet none knew better than himself, that it is inevitable. 'Unhappy Mind!' an ancient Platonist might exclaim; 'so strictly is it united to that mad yokefellow, Matter, so immersed in that abominable and utterly depraved ὕλη, that it can find a tongue only by its aid; it cannot utter a syllable of its most essential and appropriate facts of consciousness, except in symbols themselves furnished by matter, and through a grossly material medium.' The immaterial mind, when it has formed its sublime and refined notions, can render them visible to others, or represent them even to itself, only by the help of fancy and imagination, and must dress them in the garment supplied from their fantastical wardrobe. Descartes himself cannot enunciate the first great truth—the foundation-stone of all his philosophy,—'Je *pense*,'—that operation which is the primordial fact of consciousness, and the essential characteristic and prerogative of an 'immaterial substance,' without begging of matter (which, however, still waits to be created by his logic), a word originally significant of that gravity which is one of its grossest properties! To such artifices is the reason of man reduced. It is as if a philosopher, having excogitated and elaborated some subtle theory, went straight to a poet, to beg him to be its interpreter to mankind; or as if a mathematician, having defined his triangles, circles, and

parallelograms, repaired to a carpenter to construct them. Psyche is, no question, immaterial and immortal; but every movement and every flutter is by the aid of material pinions.

We often hear of Descartes' 'celebrated argument' for the existence of God. In fact he has not only, as some say, 'two,' and as M. Jules Simon and others say, 'three,' but even more; all deduced however, unquestionably, from his views of the constitution of the mind itself, and all having the advantage, or the disadvantage (as the reader pleases) of being independent of the discovery or even the existence of an external world. They have all been sometimes called by courtesy *à priori* arguments, though some of them are as much deductions *à posteriori* (the elements, however, being from the mind not from the material universe) as those which are usually so called; that is, they are from effects to causes, and from effects manifesting a certain nature to a cause manifesting a similar nature. But we will give the summary of the several arguments as found in the first pages of the First Part of the 'Principia,'—certainly the most mature, perhaps the most logical form which his many expositions of his philosophical principles assumed. The same arguments, however, in substance will be found in his 'Method,' his 'Meditations,' and his 'Replies to the Objections' elicited by the last work.

§ 14. 'In as much as necessary existence is involved in our conception of God, we justly infer that God exists.' This is properly the Cartesian argument—if it be not rather called that of Anselm—to say nothing of the very similar one, constructed and confuted by Thomas Aquinas, as cited by Caterus in his objections to the 3rd Meditation of Descartes.

§§ 17, 18. 'In proportion as the objective *perfection* of any of our ideas is greater, in that proportion its *cause* must be greater: Hence, again, it is concluded that God exists.' Another variation of the above argument of Aquinas.

§ 20. 'We are made not by ourselves, but by God; (some external cause); *hence*, God exists.' A deduction *à posteriori.*

§ 21. 'The preservation of our life, which depends not on ourselves, suffices to demonstrate the existence of God.' A deduction *à posteriori.*

The principal argument here, and which is generally called, *par excellence*, the Cartesian, is the first. 'I have the idea of an infinite and perfect being; but that idea includes his existence as one of his *perfections;* for he would not be a perfect being, if he did not exist; therefore the idea of such a being involves his existence.' In this notion, exclaim Leibnitz and a multitude of other critics, Descartes was anticipated by Anselm. *N'importe;* it is of little consequence to trace the parentage of what has appeared to the generality of thinkers a transparent paralogism; and, as it seems to us, most justly. A poet might as well affirm that, because he can conceive, in virtue of his faculty of idealising reality, a scene of beauty more perfect than nature presents, and that its greatest perfection would be its *existence*, such a scene must actually exist. On the fallacy lurking in the expression, that the idea of a perfect being involves existence as one of its perfections, some exceedingly acute remarks have been made by Brooke Taylor* and other writers; but without going into these subtleties, we imagine there is not one in a million who would for a moment be willing to suspend this cardinal truth on any such notion as that of the necessary objective existence of God, *merely* because the mind has such an idea.

Another modification of Descartes' favourite argument is founded on the assertion that the idea of God in the mind cannot have been *made* in the mind, because the mind cannot *unmake* it. *Ergò*, God exists.

* Cited in Hallam's Literature of Europe. Criticism on Descartes, vol. iii. pp. 237, 238

To this it has been justly replied, that it would be difficult to prove the objective reality of every notion, which the mind in accordance with its laws has clearly fabricated, but which it cannot afterwards by any act of the will destroy; and by those who flatter themselves that the notion of God could and would be naturally fabricated out of the combination and aggregation of all known perfections seen in man, the force of this argument would be denied.

Another modification of the argument from the *idea* of God, though in strictness a deduction *à posteriori* —is this, 'I have the idea of a being infinite and eternal: How came I by this idea? I am a finite and imperfect being, and I cannot have given it to myself; there must be at least as much reality in the cause as in the effect.' As one of his critics remarks, there does not seem much difference between this, and saying, 'I *am*, and am conscious I did not bestow existence on myself: therefore I owe it ultimately to another.' But Descartes also avails himself of this form of the argument, though he seems to prefer the former. Either of them is in the ordinary form of the deduction *à posteriori*—from effect to cause,—only the premises are exclusive of external phenomena and are derived simply from the facts of consciousness. And to most men, this argument will be cogent enough for the proof, in the last resort, of *some* cause of our existence, not itself derived; though they may reject the superfluous clause Descartes has added, 'for if I had bestowed *existence* on myself, I should, doubtless, have conferred *all other perfections*.' If there be any one who has the front to say that he has bestowed *existence* on himself, he would, we apprehend, be little likely to flinch from saying that he has also bestowed all *possible* perfections on himself—at least, for aught he knows!

We are far from denying that there is great force in the argument for the divine existence derived from the constitution of the human mind, when properly

stated. It requires to be presented, however, in a different form, and must also occupy a totally different place to what it does in Descartes' philosophy. That the human mind, as it gradually unfolds, under an external stimulus indeed, but in harmony with its own original laws of thought, which impose upon it a certain course of development, does very generally (we may say, almost universally) arrive at *some* notions of a deity is a matter of undeniable experience. This general fact requires to be accounted for as much as any other; and how can it be accounted for so naturally as by the supposition that man *is* thus constituted, because that being to whom it thus apparently bears uniform testimony has thus constituted him? But then this argument is quite different from that of Descartes. This last presupposes, not simply a constitution of mind which, developing *pari passu* with the intuition of an external world, and by contact with it, will necessarily evolve the idea of God, but such an idea as, even if dependent in fact for its development on external influences, enables us, and alone enables us by its internal light, to infer the *actual existence* of an external world. So far again as the argument depends for its cogency on the *uniformity* of the phenomenon,—as it is manifested in the mind of man generally,—it must, as we have said, occupy a totally different place to what it does in Descartes' philosophy. For it must be recollected, that Descartes, at this stage of his self-constructed universe, knows nothing of an external world—nothing, therefore, as to whether there be any other minds or not—and nothing, therefore, as to whether the uniformity which supports the above argument exist or not. He believes in an external world, and that its phenomena are not illusions, *only* because he has demonstrated previously the existence of God from the idea of him. The idea itself, therefore, must be supposed irresistibly distinct and powerful to each individual mind.

The Apostle John (it may be humbly presumed, as

sound a divine as Descartes, and certainly in this case a sounder philosopher) makes the love of our brother easier than the love of God, our brother being more familiarly known than God: 'He who loveth not his brother whom he *hath* seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?' Descartes goes another way to work, and asks, how shall man believe even the existence of his brother whom he hath seen, if he first of all believe not in the existence of God whom he hath not seen?

Whatever force has been supposed to attach to these mentally deduced proofs of the Deity, — from the idea of God in the human mind, — we see not anything in them, even when exhibited in the best form, and still less in relation to the unhappy position they occupy in Descartes' philosophy, which the atheist with *his* premises cannot evade. In looking even at the more reasonable form of the argument, it certainly appears to be just as easy for one who finds no difficulty in affirming that all the proofs of a designing and superintending wisdom which the universe presents, are mere chance, to urge exactly the same of the apparent voice of intuition, the uniform, or all but uniform tendencies of the constitution of the human mind; they are, he would say, quite as plausibly, (and we must say not more impudently,) simply one more of the infinite freaks of chance!

On that theory of 'innate ideas,' which has been generally, though falsely, attributed to Descartes, the answers are easy enough. Men in general will say, that if we have an 'innate idea,' of God in this sense, — if an idea thus powerful be impressed on each individual mind, it seems strange that it should need any *inference* or *argument* to make it plainer, or that it should admit of any *dispute*. Far from finding that all men have a 'clear and distinct idea of an infinite and eternal being,' they will say, that the ideas formed of God in the vast majority of instances have been most grossly inadequate and limited; that it is a

common remark, borne out by all history, that so far from man's ideas of God being Godlike, his gods have usually been human, or even below that. It will seem strange indeed, they will argue, that if there be an 'innate idea' in all men, coeval with the soul itself and congenital with its faculties, it should have been so uniformly debased and mutilated.

While we do not see the often vaunted superiority of the argument derived from the constitution of the human mind *alone*, even when it is put, as we conceive, in the most cautious terms and most favourable form, we are far from denying, when so put, its cogency. Powerful it undoubtedly is; and would to all but an atheist be very convincing. But in truth, if there be such a thing as a *bonâ fide* atheist—who is not also mad, argument with him, in any shape, is a very hopeless sort of an affair. If however, with such a man any argument be less inefficacious than another, it is, we firmly believe, what is called that *à posteriori* argument, which it has been the fashion of late years so absurdly to decry. At all events, it is that to which human nature, savage and civilised, appeals in one shape or other, when asked *why* it thinks there is a God at all. It points its finger at the sublime trophies of wisdom and power with which the universe is filled, and says, if not in so many words, in words of kindred meaning, the 'invisible things of the Creator are known by the visible things he hath made; even his eternal power and Godhead.' 'He that planted the eye, shall he not see? He that made the ear, shall he not hear?' But it is infinitely far from our purpose to exalt any one proof of this primal truth at the expense of the rest; and happily, as in other cases, some may be more forcible to one class of minds, and some to another.

In exhibiting the principal points of Descartes' argument on this great theme, we have passed by many of the metaphysical refinements by which he attempts to sustain or illustrate his views. In one of

his illustrations there is a curious subtlety; more curious indeed than convincing. He endeavours to show in his 'Method,' or rather he confidently asserts *without* showing, that 'the clear and distinct idea of a triangle' does *not* involve the necessary existence of any triangle, but that the clear and distinct notion of God does involve his necessary existence. Yet both there* and in his 'Meditations,' he affirms that our idea of God involves his existence, just as our idea of a triangle involves the idea of the equality of its three angles to two right angles. One would imagine that a real parity of reasoning would imply, that as our clear and distinct idea of a Perfect Being involves his real existence, so our clear and distinct idea of a triangle involves *its* existence. Yet this he denies.

Similarly inconsistent appear to us his statements respecting our notions of the *infinite*. In his 'Principia,' he contents himself with briefly stating that infinity as attached to God is a positive and unique idea, and differs from the notion as applied to the infinite in magnitude and number. To the latter, he proposes applying the term *indefinite*. Gassendi endeavours to show the extreme precariousness of any conclusion based on such distinction, by affirming that the idea of the infinite in both cases is negative, founded on the absence of limit; that infinite space is space indefinitely vast; that infinite wisdom, in the same manner, is wisdom indefinitely great; and that both the one and the other result from successive augmentations of limited magnitudes and limited wisdom. Descartes, in his reply, says, 'It is not true that we conceive the infinite by the negation of the finite; seeing that, on the contrary, all limitation contains in itself the negation of the infinite' (p. 360. edition by M. Simon). 'Think not that the idea we have of God, is formed by perpetual augmentation of

* La Methode, Partie Quatrième.

the perfection of the creatures; it is formed entire and at once,'—*tout entière et tout à la fois*,—'from the conception by our mind of infinite being, incapable of any sort of augmentation.' (*Ibid.* p. 365.)

Now it is at all events curious, that in one of his letters Descartes distinctly concedes that our idea of the *infinite* perfections of God is deduced from the consciousness of similar, though very minute attributes in us—which are indefinitely enlarged and applied to him. The passage is hard to reconcile with the preceding, and with many others. As it has not, so far as we are aware, been noticed by modern critics, we translate it. The letter containing it (*Epist.* pars I. p. 279.) is in reply to certain objections. 'You say, that inasmuch as there is somewhat of wisdom, power, goodness, magnitude, and so on, in ourselves, we form the idea of *infinite* or at least *indefinite* wisdom, power, goodness, and the other perfections which are attributed to God, just as we form the idea of infinite magnitude; *all which I freely concede; and I am clearly persuaded that we have no other idea of God than what is formed in this manner.* But the force of my argument' (the celebrated argument) 'consists in this, that I contend that it would be impossible for me, by my thinking faculty, to expand those perfections which are minute in me to the notion of the infinite, except we derived our existence from a being in whom these perfections are in *fact* found infinite; as neither from the inspection of a minute quantity or a limited body, could I conceive indefinite quantity, unless the magnitude of the universe were, *or at least might be, indefinite.*' By the way, it is wonderful that the last clause should not have convinced Descartes of the precariousness of his logic in his celebrated paralogism: for a parity of conclusion would have led him to say, that similarly he could not conceive the infinite, unless the Infinite Being *did* exist—or at least *might* exist. But as he could prove that God *did* exist from the very idea of him, so he would perhaps

have been prepared to prove that he *must* exist, if he *might* have existed! However this may be, the statements in reference to the formation of the notion of the infinite remain to us somewhat inconsistent. It is certainly sufficiently perplexing, when not only *different* metaphysicians tell us, but even the *same* metaphysician, first, that the notion of the finite is formed from the negation of the infinite, and, secondly, that the notion of the infinite is formed from the augmentation of the finite.

But we must endeavour to secure a little space for the consideration of Descartes' 'Method.'

It is curious to see the widely different judgments which different men form of the merits of the very same philosophers. 'Descartes,' says M. Cousin, 'has established in France precisely the same method which England has been eager to attribute exclusively to Bacon.' 'It is impossible,' says Playfair, 'that two men could pursue the same ends by methods more diametrically opposite.' Between these very diverse statements it is possible in some measure to diminish the enormous interval by proper explanations; for what may not be explained, or explained away? but there will be little doubt with any dispassionate person, who has studied the writings of *both* philosophers, that the statement of Playfair is far nearer the truth.

Each of these great philosophers, indeed, was deeply imbued with the importance of a Method; and each recognised, though in *reversed* proportions, the necessity of *both* induction and deduction in rearing the fabric of science. It is not more true that Bacon (in passages candidly cited by Cousin*) admits the value and necessity of a *provisional* 'anticipation' of nature as the only rational guide of that observation and experiment which alone can give the 'interpretation' of nature, than it is that Descartes insists on the necessity of experiments as a condition of the verification

* Cours de Philosophie; Histoire: Onzième Leçon.

of the truth of scientific deduction, and even insists on their being more necessary at every step, as the conclusions of science become more intricate, and the elements with which it has to deal more subtle. The reader will find some remarkable passages to this effect at the close of his 'Method;'* and in this anticipation we are by no means sure that he is not right, notwithstanding the confident expectations indulged by many that as induction advances, and the data for deduction become more and more sure, this last will in its turn *reverse* the proportions in which the true interpretation of nature has hitherto employed both instruments, and become the more important of the two. That deduction will have ampler and ampler scope, and become of more and more utility, we have no doubt; that it will do its peculiar work better and better, we have as little; but we still doubt whether it will not continually demand or suggest new exercises for induction in full proportion to every truth it proves or confirms. The reasons for suspecting this we will briefly touch by and by.

But though it is true that neither Bacon nor Descartes in strictness disclaimed the necessity or utility of either of these instruments of prosecuting science, the instruments themselves occupied in their two systems the most dissimilar positions; and there can hardly be a question that Bacon's estimate was the more correct of the two. In his system, induction was first, first in order and importance; that without which man could not proceed a single step in physical science; in that of Descartes deduction from assumed principles came first; induction and experiment were only ministering organs. It was the glory of Bacon (and it was virtually a great triumph of mental philosophy as well as a noble example of that very induction from physical facts, the claims of which he asserted,) that he saw clearly, both from observation and consciousness, that the mind of man was so con

* Sixième Partie, pp. 40, 41. (Edition of M. J. Simon.)

stituted in relation to external nature — such its limitations and conditions of thought — that it could not, for the most part, anticipate at all, and never with absolute precision and certainty without the verification of observation and experiment, what facts were connected with what *other* facts; what consequents would follow from any given antecedents; in other words, that man could not construct the premises from which, in physical science, he might *certainly* deduce his conclusions. It was the error of Descartes, on the other hand, that he reversed the proportions assigned to the influence of this predominant element in Bacon's method; and believed that man *could* construct his premises and deduce his conclusions from them; that man, as he expressly declares, could, and, if a true philosopher, *ought* to deduce 'effects from causes,' and not collect 'causes from effects.' But it would be unjust to both to forget what has been said, that neither looked upon that element to which he gave a *secondary* place as of *absolutely* little importance. Descartes, as already hinted, not only thought that experiment was perpetually necessary to test and verify the results of deduction; but that it would be more so as science advanced, on account of the increasing complexity of the phenomena to be investigated, and the sources of fallacy which lurk, in what Mr. Mill has so aptly named, 'Intermixture of Effects and Plurality of Causes.' This admission itself affords the strongest condemnation of the order of investigation pursued by Descartes; for how many hypotheses might be framed and discarded before man arrived at the *only* one which experiment and observation would thus verify! how many anticipations of nature must go to make up one true and authentic interpretation! This indeed is a reflection, the justice of which the melancholy history of all philosophy, when pursued as Descartes suggests, has abundantly exemplified.

'Descartes,' says Playfair, in a very lively passage,

'did not reject experiment altogether, though he assigned it a very subordinate place in his philosophy. . . . "We employ experiment, says he (Descartes), not as a reason by which anything is proved, for we wish to deduce effects from their causes, and not conversely causes from their effects. We appeal to experience only, that out of innumerable effects which may be produced from the same cause, we may direct our attention to one rather than another." It is wonderful that Descartes did not see what a severe censure he was here passing on himself; of how little value the speculations must be that led to conclusions so vague and indefinite; and how much more philosophy is disgraced by affording an explanation of things which *are not* than by *not* affording the explanation of things which *are*.'

On the other hand, it would have been a gross error in Bacon had he ever *intended* to imply that 'anticipation' of *some results rather than others*, was not to preside over all experiment and observation; without which, indeed, in the vast majority of instances, it were utterly impossible that man should be adequately impelled to devise 'experiments' or to persevere in 'observation.' This 'anticipation' is the very spur of that curiosity, without which great genius would not submit, with patience, to be the mere interpreter of nature, and its reluctance would grow stronger and stronger, the more deep the truth sought, and the more refined the instruments required to extort it. In 'torturing' nature, as Bacon has it in his strong imagery, man would, in such a drudging office, torture himself still more; and his indolence would get the better of his philosophy. And, in truth, as there must always be, not only scope, but a necessity for such provisional anticipation, so there would be neither dignity nor merit in scientific discovery without it; men would say there was great good luck in a discovery rather than great sagacity. The achievements of scientific genius are measured not so much

by the magnitude of a discovery (at least in the estimate of all thinking men) as by the approximate accuracy—it is seldom more—of the anticipated results; and it is this prophetic instinct of science—an 'anticipation' of nature, which in certain points is indefinitely near the true 'interpretation,'—this seer-like utterance of her oracles though it may be 'in lisping accents and a stammering tongue'—which constitutes the glory of the successful philosopher. Bacon must not, therefore, be supposed for a moment to have undervalued the necessity for provisional 'anticipations;' although, intent on inculcating the paramount importance of induction, he may have sometimes seemed to depreciate their value.*

He was certainly opposed to no 'anticipations' of nature which do not involve (what he was chiefly anxious to guard against) the *abuse* of hypothesis,—the disposition of philosophers to make it, not a light and loose garment to be thrown on and off at pleasure, but their very skin; their proneness to force their conceptions on Nature, whether she will or not, and to tell her that they know her better than she knows herself. As to the use of hypothesis, and the vanity of blind and unintelligent inquiry at Nature's oracles, no one can be more explicit than Bacon himself; or speak with more contempt of that 'vaga experientia quæ mera palpatio est.' A just image of the empirical philosopher who confounds induction with the 'mera palpatio' would be a man admitted to an immense laboratory of all sorts of chemicals—some more simple and some less—and essaying discovery by going round the shelves and amusing himself with pouring a little out of one box or phial into any other, as their proximity or his own eye or fancy suggested, just to see *what would come of it.* Now if he did not

* We earnestly recommend to every student of philosophy, some excellent remarks by Mr. Mill, on the subject of Hypothesis. (*Logic*, vol. ii. ch. 14.)

manage to choke himself with some unhappy evolution of gases, of which he had had no 'anticipation,' nor could give any 'interpretation;' or blind himself with some equally novel and brilliant explosion of inflammable substances; or poison himself with some subtle exhalation,—there is no doubt but he *might* chance to stumble on some singular discovery; upon none, however, greater than the discovery that he would not know what he had discovered. On the other hand, if he made no discovery, nobody would be surprised; nor, lastly, concede him any merit if he did.

We return to the subject postponed a page or two back. Though it is evident that deduction will play a more and more important part as science advances, because it will have wider and wider bases of inference before it, it may still be doubted whether it will ever—we do not say supersede, but even much diminish the necessity for induction and experiment; whether, in fact, Descartes' view is not near the truth. One may suspect this, not merely because (as Mr. Mill properly says) *deduction* must presuppose and demand *induction*—not only because the deductive process (to make it worth anything) will ever demand *verification*, which itself involves an appeal to induction; nor merely because as the *data* of deductive inference become more and more extensive and complex, the inferences themselves (as the same writer observes) involve an analysis and computations which can rarely be performed with more than approximate accuracy;—not only, we say, for these reasons, but for another and more direct one. It is this: that the results of the deductive process, being rarely more than approximations to complete solution, with whatsoever sagacity and subtlety conducted, will often require to be *rectified* as well as verified by further observation; the very attempt to verify them will often reveal previously unsuspected residual phenomena, which *ought* not to exist, if both data and deduction were complete, and suggest an entirely new

series of experiments and observations to adjust the theory to the facts.*

Though, therefore, the triumphs of deduction may be continually more splendid, those very triumphs will, in all probability, disclose new fields for the achievements of induction.

In short, in the attempt to unravel *completely* any considerable portion of the great web of the universe, much more of the whole, induction and deduction may, for aught we know, reciprocally involve one another in an interminable progression;—so far, according to Bacon's sublime language, does the 'subtlety of nature surpass the subtlety either of sense or intellect.' Thus will man be ever tied, as a condition of advancement, to observation and experiment; deduction will always be preceded and accompanied by them, and never be independent of them; while the most sagacious conjectures will still end with the Queen of Sheba's exclamation, 'The half hath not been told me.' And surely man may well be contented with his sublime, though he is sometimes apt to think it, humble office of *interpreter* of nature. It is enough for him. To what greater glory can the creature aspire than that of being the interpreter of his Creator? to decipher those hieroglyphics which are symbols—though but imperfect symbols—of the Infinite One? There is no sublimer passage of poetry in the world than that in Job (to which far from justice is done in our translation), in which the Patriarch, after having enumerated even the splendours with which God has 'garnished the heavens,' and the art with which He has

* See the striking observations of Mr. J. S. Mill on the subject of the 'Method of Residues,' with the beautiful illustrations from Sir John Herschel. (*Mill's Logic*, vol. i. p. 501.) Mr. Mill's observations on Residual Phenomena, are made, indeed, in reference to the results of the experimental methods of inquiry; but similar observations seem applicable to many results of the deductive process. See Sir J. Herschel's 'Discourse,' pp. 174-5., for some striking remarks on the *alternate* use of these instruments.

'hung the world upon nothing,' exclaims, 'How slight is the *whisper* that we hear of him! But the *thunder* of his power who can comprehend?'

Even the felt necessity, however, of *verification*, for every result of deduction, shows how completely, from the very constitution of his nature, man is tied down to experiment and observation; and how, unless these authenticate his 'anticipations,' all he achieves by the other instrument goes for nought, if it is to pass as a declaration of *what is*. Take the case of Halley's wonderful prophecy of the periodic time of what is naturally called *his* comet. If we may suppose (what was by no means impossible) that during several successive years of its predicted return, clouds had obstinately filled the sky, and concealed it from the astronomer's gaze, would the world have given absolute faith to the predictions? No verily; it would have been said, '*If* the comet does indeed move in the exact path and observe the prescribed laws of your calculation, it will have returned, though we saw it not; but there are so many unknown causes,' (some, indeed, which *modify* Halley's anticipations have been discovered since,) 'which may vitiate the result, that we cannot accept it as a *fact*, till we observe the comet's return. Your calculations are all hypothetically true; they tell us what *may be*, but they must not assure us of what *is*, till fact itself has confirmed them.'

The rules which Descartes, as well as Bacon, have given for the prosecution of scientific discovery—the one more particularly in relation to the process of induction, and the other to that of deduction—may seem of very little use as *directly* applied to the purposes for which they were more immediately designed; and perhaps no great discovery was ever made by the mechanical or deliberately conscious application of the rules of either. Yet it would be a fallacious conclusion that they are of no utility at all; and far greater would be the error of concluding the like in relation

to the general observations (such as those in the immortal first book of the NOVUM ORGANUM), which tend to forewarn the mind itself of the points in which an ambush of error may be suspected; to guard it against the easily besetting prejudices which spring from its very constitution, or have been contracted in the course of its development; and to remind it during the course or in the review of its operations, to ask whether certain points have been guarded, certain cautions observed, certain known conditions complied with. Such observations, when well founded, however unsusceptible of a direct application to the discovery of an unknown truth, or explanation of an unknown phenomenon, tend by a general influence to *rectify* the position of the mind. They are not (if we may borrow a metaphor from astronomy) the telescope by which the star we seek is revealed, but they enable us, as astronomers say, to allow for the aberration of light, and to adjust the instrument in the right position for observation. There are some admirable sentences in Mill's Logic applicable to this subject. 'There is not,' says he, 'properly an Art of Observing. There may be rules for observing. But these, like rules for inventing, are properly instructions for the preparation of one's own mind; for putting it into the state in which it will be most fitted to observe, or most likely to invent. They are, therefore, essentially rules of self-education, which is a different thing from Logic. They do not teach how to do the thing, but how to make ourselves capable of doing it. They are an art of strengthening the limbs, not an art of using them.'

Viewed in any other light, the four meagre rules of Descartes mentioned in his 'Method,' or even the more elaborate one and twenty in his posthumous 'Régles pour la direction de l'esprit,'* seem rather

* This work contains many admirable observations of that more *general* character to which we have above adverted; tending to enlarge and rectify the conceptions under which the mind

useless. Of most of them we might make a remark somewhat similar to that of Descartes himself on his celebrated criterion 'that the things we conceive clearly and distinctly must be all true;' on which, he naïvely adds, 'there is only some little difficulty in thoroughly determining what *are* the things which we conceive distinctly;' a point which, considering what thoughts not only the vulgar, but philosophers of the thousand and one sects, *have* supposed to be clear and distinct, is a little perplexing. Of all the *four* rules given in his 'Method' one may certainly be justified in saying what M. Cousin remarks of one of them: 'They are very important and very wise, but more easy to recommend than to follow.' The first is 'never to accept anything as true which is not *clearly known to be such;*' the second, 'to divide each difficulty under examination into as many parts as may be *requisite* for its solution;' the third, 'to conduct the thoughts in *order*, commencing with the simplest objects and proceeding to the more complex;' and the fourth, 'to make enumerations so complete and surveys so general, as to be certain that *nothing is omitted.*' (Method, Part II.)

It is evident that both Bacon and Descartes thought that a system of rules might be devised which would do much more than any such system can; which, in fact, would wonderfully diminish that interval which must ever subsist between a great genius and a great blockhead. How exactly does the following passage from Descartes' 'Régles pour la direction de l'esprit' coincide with certain well-known passages of the 'NOVUM ORGANUM.' 'Or dans tout ce traité nous tâcherons de suivre avec exactitude et d'aplanir les voies

may set about philosophising; to exercise a pervading influence over the habits of thought; to inspire, in a word, the philosophic spirit. Considered as a specific apparatus designed for conscious application in the attempt to elicit scientific truth, it is, for the reasons assigned, unsatisfactory; viewed in any light, perhaps it scarcely merits the high eulogium M. Cousin has passed upon it.

qui peuvent conduire l'homme à la découverte de la vérité, en sorte que *l'esprit le plus médiocre,* pourvu qu'il soit pénétré profondément de cette méthode, verra que la vérité ne lui est pas plus interdite qu'à tout autre, et que, s'il ignore quelque chose, ce n'est faute ni d'esprit ni de capacité.'

The illustrations which they have both used in reference to a 'wrong' and a 'right' method (so singularly similar that it is difficult not to suppose that the one was suggested by the other) are indeed true enough. 'A cripple in the right road,' says Bacon, 'will beat a racer in the wrong;' 'Those who walk slowly,' says Descartes, 'will make faster progress, if they pursue the right road, than those who run swiftly, if they run in a wrong one.' But then a cripple, even in the *right* road, will be but a cripple still. For the actual advancement of science, for making any new discoveries where they *are* made (and are not mere accident), so much is necessary to be drawn *ex visceribus causæ;* so much more depends on individual sagacity in relation to the special circumstances than on any general rules whatever; nay, so much sagacity is even required to derive any benefit from rules themselves, that though blockheads may acquire what genius has once discovered, only genius could discover it. It is, indeed, quite true (to use Bacon's illustration) that the most unskilful hand with a pair of compasses will draw a more exact circle than even the most adroit and practised hand without them; but the *compasses* are yet to be invented, which will enable an ordinary intellect to be a great scientific discoverer. If, indeed, the comparison be between genius with rules and genius without them, then, *cæteris paribus,* we cannot but think that he who has pondered deeply a system in which the general conditions of investigation are accurately described, and the principal sources of error pointed out, will have an immense advantage over him who has no knowledge of the kind; less, indeed, from any

possibility of a deliberate or mechanical application of any maxims, than from the unconscious but diffusive influence they exert on the general habits of thought.

We had intended offering some remarks on some other points in Descartes' philosophy; especially on the prominence he gave to the notion of *substance* compared with that of *cause*, and the confusion by which he represented conservation and creation as the same act; — by which his system, it is affirmed, was successively developed or distorted into those of Malebranche, Spinosa, and Leibnitz. But our space forbids; and we must content ourselves with referring to the acute remarks of M. Cousin * and M. Jules Simon.†

But there is one subject on which we cannot prevail upon ourselves to be wholly silent. We allude to the opinions of Descartes in relation to the lower animals: certainly among the most paradoxical held by his eccentric genius. Not that it is perfectly clear what he *did* hold, and certain that he did *not* hold the extreme opinion which is sometimes attributed to him; that is, that animals are not only *automata*, inasmuch as they are supposed to be destitute of intelligence and volition, but that they are destitute of all *feeling*, and therefore may be kicked and cuffed, certainly dissected and experimented upon for the benefit of philosophy, *ad libitum*. If that were true, nothing could be more reasonable than the *sang-froid* with which a Majendie might torture animals for the advancement of science; nor anything more unreasonable than the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; — a society which, if the views of some interpreters of Descartes were correct, would be, with him, of the same utility as a hospital for blighted shrubs or cases of potato disease. The truth

* Cours de Philosophie; Leçon Onzième.
† Introduction.

is, that Descartes did not go this length. There are expressions, indeed, which would almost justify the supposition, were it not for others of a contrary tendency; and perhaps if his principles with regard to the mechanical origin and exhibition of the phenomena of *sentient* life in the lower animals were logigically carried out, he ought, in consistency, to have proceeded to this extravagance. But, in fact, with all his incomparable powers of expression, there is not, just as in the case of his varying language on the subject of 'innate ideas,' that steadiness in the utterance of his views, given at different times and to meet various objections, which could be wished.

It is wonderful that with so clear a perception, and on such strong grounds, of the distinction between Matter and Mind, he should have associated the appearances of sensation, conception, appetite, and emotion in the brutes, rather with the phenomena of the former than with those of the latter; and most of all, that he should have done so when he had defined 'une chose pensante,' as including the idea of 'une chose qui *sent*.' This being the case, it seems, as Gassendi has remarked, incomprehensible, that even denying intelligence and volition to brutes, the phenomena in which they resemble ourselves should be all attributable to material causes and mechanical laws.*

* Even putting *sensation* out of the question, and looking only at the profound mystery, which still baffles all physiologists — animal *life*,— it is amusing to see with what ease Descartes accounts for its phenomena by the rudest mechanical and chemical hypotheses. Thus, in his perspicuous, and to so great extent accurate, account of the circulation of the blood, in the fifth part of the 'Method,' he supposes that the alternate dilatation and contraction of the heart is all satisfactorily accounted for by the supposition of *heat*, and its expansive power. This heat he supposes to be exactly the same as that evolved in fermentation. It is also evident that Descartes, with his imperfect conceptions of chemistry and physiology, thought, not merely that mechanical laws would much more easily and satisfactorily account for the phenomena of *animal* life — and even for the appearances

He supposes (to employ his wonted illustration) that an indefinitely skilful artificer might construct out of matter, and by purely mechanical laws, automata exhibiting all the phenomena observed in brutes, and, by parity of reasoning, all that we observe in man — the *pensée* to which exclusively he arrogates immateriality, alone excepted; — only, as already shown, he somehow strangely conjoins in men the 'qui sent' with the 'qui pense.'* Either he should have found sensation in man wholly explicable by material causes, or he should have *not* found it so in brutes. This was surely most arbitrary philosophy. If *feeling* in man involves *thought*, why should *feeling* in brutes involve only *mechanism?* Meantime, on the genuine principles on which he set out, and by which he distinguishes matter and mind, he should have argued that sensation as much inferred an immaterial substance, as thought, volition, conscience, — there being an equal dissimilarity between all

of sensation, passion, and association exhibited by the lower animals — than they ever will; but that there was a far less complicated and subtle apparatus for uniting in man the kingdoms of mind and matter, the corporeal and the spiritual, than nature has really provided. In short, he thought that, being perfectly distinct, they were divided by a broad and well-defined frontier line, instead of exhibiting as they do, such subtle and refined interaction; rendering it impossible to say even now, how many mysteries of how many sciences may be involved in the entire production and manifestation of their inextricable phenomena.

* In the following paragraph of a letter to Henry More, who vehemently reluctated against this article of the Cartesian philosophy, he frankly states this infirmity in his Logic, which, however, he does nothing to remedy: 'I see no reason for supposing thought in brutes except this only; that since they have eyes, ears, tongues, and other organs like ours, it is very probable that they *feel* as we do; and since in *our* mode of sensation, thought is included, thought must also be attributed to them: which reason, as it is very obvious, has taken possession of the minds of men from the earliest times. But there are many more reasons, and *much more strong*, which, though not so obvious, evince the contrary.' (*Epist.* lxvii. Part I.)

these phenomena and the observed phenomena of matter. He should have concluded, on *his* principles, that, though the lower animals may not possess an immaterial principle of the same power, compass, or variety, as man, yet that it is certain there is *something* immaterial in them, if there be any such thing in man. Sensation, pleasure, pain, ought as satisfactorily to infer this as intelligence and thought; it being just as inconceivable that the former states are not states of *mind* as that the latter are not.

And even as regards *intelligence*, the reasonings of Descartes to show that animals are destitute of it are, to our minds, wholly unsatisfactory. His arguments only show what none — not even a candid brute — would ever feel disposed to doubt or dispute, that the mind of man is *superior* to that of brutes; though probably brutes themselves would hint that even this is to be received with many individual exceptions; and that, as compared with many bipeds, some highly respectable quadrupeds have an evident advantage. There may be an instrument of thought in them which, like a flute as compared with an organ, may differ in variety and compass from our own, and yet be equally immaterial; the degree of its variety and compass, in every case, varying with the place of each class of animals in the universal system; exquisitely adapted to that material conformation which each possesses, and accurately limited by it. The analogies and differences between the material organisation of brutes and that of man, — exactly adjusted to the sphere of each species of animals, — would seem to point to corresponding analogies and differences in relation to the sentient and intelligent principle; and if, therefore, man has an immaterial principle superadded to his material organism, so, in all probability, have the lower animals. Analogy would certainly lead us to suspect that, as is a dog's paw to a man's hand, so, probably, is the agent which uses the one to the agent which uses the other; and that, as

both the instruments, exquisitely formed for their respective purposes, are material, so the agents, as admirably constructed for *their* respective purposes, are equally immaterial, if either be so.

The arguments on which Descartes chiefly insists,—namely, those derived from the absence in brutes of the *conventional signs* by which men communicate their thoughts,—are either beside the mark, or involve a *petitio principii*, or are adduced in utter forgetfulness of those very differences, (and the *limitations* they suggest,) of which we have just spoken. He says we never find animals, whatever their improvement, framing general signs; that any language they have, only serves to express sensation, appetite, and passion. Now, not to insist again that *these* would seem just as much properties of mind as thought itself, it may be remarked — first, that it is gratuitous to say that the signs are thus limited; that we know not in what way or to what extent brutes communicate with each other; that numberless phenomena would go to show that in all probability they *do* communicate to a much greater extent than we are aware of; and that signs, of whatever nature, are as much a language as our own, though they may not be so perfect a language. When Balaam's ass reproved the capricious temper of his master, did he do it more eloquently than the speaking silence of many an ill-treated brute rebukes the wanton cruelty of his tyrant master? But, secondly, we remark that, to say that animals do not use *our* signs, and exhibit a capacity of reasoning as *we* reason, is entirely to forget the analogies of which we have above spoken, and to demand a species of proof for which it is absurd to ask. We may say to Descartes as Gassendi says to him: —'Mais voyez, je vous prie, si vous êtes assez equitable d'exiger d'une bête des paroles d'un homme et cependant de ne prendre pas garde à celles qui leur sont propres.' As to the signs animals use, we have long felt that it is mere presumption in us to affirm that they are so very

limited as men are apt to suppose; and that if we could construct a grammar and dictionary of monkey-language or bee-language, we might, perhaps, find it a much more wonderful and artificial instrument, and of far greater compass and copiousness, than we, with our superiority, are disposed to admit. That it would not be like *our* language may be safely affirmed from the very limitations already referred to.

Some will tell us that *instinct* accounts for all the phenomena in question; but then, without an immaterial principle, what will account for instinct? 'Well; but the *uniformity* of the phenomena of instinct.' Yes, and the uniformity of many of the phenomena in man; of his sensations, his appetites, his actions, his reasonings. If we could find a satisfactory solution of the one in a mechanical and automatic origin, we might, perhaps, find it of the other. The instincts by which bees build their cells would hardly be more incomprehensible displays of automatic power to a being who had no other knowledge of man than we possess of brutes,—who lived wholly *outside* us,—than would seem to such a being the housebuilding and the cooking tendencies of man. And if it be said, 'Not so; for whatever general uniformity in the latter case, there is far greater variety than in the former;' he would, perhaps, whimsically account for it by *our* instincts being more imperfectly and less equably distributed than theirs! He would, perhaps, say, that 'though all bees are good builders, many men are but wretched bunglers in the art.'—It is granted, however, that there is far more variety in the actions of men than in those of any other species of animals; but then we might expect, from the very different structure of his body, corresponding differences in the structure of his mind; we should anticipate from those differences just what we see, not a violation of all analogy. But this is not all that can be said. There is a variety — undeniable though, as might be expected, more limited — in the actions of brutes.

Here the argument from the uniformity of instincts breaks down; for, though there are not *so many* variations or so wide a deviation from uniform law in the lower animals as in man, there *is* a variation; there are innumerable authentic examples of adaptation, of adjustment of specific means to ends, of special modifications of instinctive action to suit emergencies; just such as more limited powers and capacities than those of man, but of the same nature, might be expected to display. In a word, if the phenomena of human thought are quite incompatible with man's being all *matter*, those of brute thought seem to involve a similar conclusion; nor can we satisfactorily argue for the first without admitting the last. We must maintain or abandon both at the same time.

It is well that 'lions cannot turn painters;' for animals might retort against us many of the arguments which we employ against them. What work they would make with our long ages of barbarism and ignorance! our egregiously imperfect first efforts, as compared with theirs! our protracted infancy, both in individuals and nations! And then what disastrous arguments might be drawn from our moral infirmities! We almost fear that the last would supply them with stronger arguments against our possession of a *reasonable* nature (whether material or immaterial), or at least, in proof of that *reasonable* nature being very inferior to their instinct, than our intellectual superiority would serve to confute.

The reason, and a very insufficient reason it is (as Dugald Stewart has remarked), for which Descartes thought himself bound to deny an immaterial principle in brutes, was, that if he admitted it, he must also admit their immortality! This he says in reply to Henry More, who, in his lively expostulation with Descartes on this subject, holds a brief for the silent brutes. In the letter from which we have already quoted he gives, 'among the many and strong reasons' for his opinion, that it seems not so probable that 'worms and fleas should be endowed with im-

mortal minds as that they are mere machines.' In another place (*Epist.* liv. p. 1.) he speaks yet more expressly. In reply to the objection that brutes may think, though, from their very different organisation, 'thought in them may be very imperfect compared with thought in us,' he says, that 'if they think as we do, they must have immortal souls as we have;' and many of them, he thinks, 'as oysters,' for example, are far too 'imperfect' for such an honour: as if there were no alternative! Yet philosophers of former ages have generally leaped with much the same precipitancy to the same conclusion, as to many others not less illusory. The argument from immateriality to immortality is evidently illogical; and though it has somehow satisfied many intelligent philosophers, it ought not, we think, to satisfy, and, if understood, would not satisfy, even an intelligent flea, to say nothing of an elephant. For if men would but confine themselves to what they *know*, they would see that nothing is more clear than the consciousness that the origin or continued existence, whether of body or spirit, depends on no will of theirs; upon nothing less than the *fiat* of that Power that created both: and certainly none ought to have seen this more clearly than Descartes himself, who, as we have seen, makes the conservation of his 'immaterial self,' from moment to moment, a distinct proof of the existence of the Deity. As far as we can see, therefore, material forms may, if the Divine will so should please, be immortal; and in like manner, immaterial essences, by the same *fiat*, may become mortal. The utmost that the doctrine of immateriality infers is, that it exempts the soul from certain *known* causes of change or dissolution; but it may have a term of its own, for aught we *know;* a cause of decay peculiar to itself. The argument is about as sound as if, having ascertained that a man will certainly not die of consumption, we were to infer that neither will he die of anything else.

We are firmly convinced of the truth of the great doctrines of the soul's immateriality and immortality.

We merely deny the force of any argument from one to the other; and, moreover, that the latter, apart from express revelation, is anything more than a most precarious conclusion from guesses and presumptions. This is amply proved by the wavering tone of all reasoning and speculation, among the greatest masters of both, previous to the Christian revelation; and it is at that period, and at that better than any other, that we can apply the true test of the limits of merely human speculation on the subject.

As to the immortality of the lower animals, apart from the same revelation (if indeed it tells us anything), we know just as little as we should about the immortality of man. The pious Bonnet, we know, and other writers, assure them of it; but we have not heard that any one has assured Bonnet. As for the usual arguments *against* it, however, (apart from some dim intimations* of Scripture,) even an intelligent brute might easily reply to them. 'It is ridiculous,' says proud man, 'to suppose them immortal.' Far be it from us to deny it; we only say that it is equally, or nearly as ridiculous, to affirm that they are *not* immortal; since what can be more ridiculous than to affirm that of which, either way, we know nothing? It may be even more probable that they are not immortal; but still we *know* nothing. Yet how easy, without denying the conclusion, or affirming it, to rebut the usual arguments! As thus: 'Is it *worthy* of the Deity,' it is sometimes asked, 'to bestow immortality on such creatures?' Why, most complacent philosopher, if it was not unworthy of Him to *create* them, and to keep them alive for a limited time, it

* The texts which look the other way, — one of which satisfied John Wesley, and at least two of the early Fathers, Luther, and a host of commentators, — are collected in 'The Penscellwood Papers.' If the hypothesis of Descartes has been said to 'have made a jest of so great a part of the creation,' what shall we think of the tragical hypothesis of Father Bougeant, who gets over the difficulties which the case of the lower animals presents, by supposing them to be Devils, to whom their life on earth is an anticipated hell?

may, for aught we know, be not unworthy of Him to restore their existence, and to continue it for an unlimited time, or for ever? 'But they have not powers which admit of an indefinite development, and adaptation to another and higher condition of existence.' How do *you* know? There *may* be in them latent capacities of transformation and development (not indeed similar to those in man, nor so glorious), which may disclose in them — in conformity with some original type for each species — perfection and beauty as much greater than those they now manifest, as man's future condition may transcend his present. It is possible — for what is impossible to that infinite versatility of wisdom which even this world presents? — that there may be a progress by which a fly or an eagle (though we are far enough from affirming it) may be as superior to what they now are, as man shall be to what he now is, when 'this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality.' 'But where, in the name of wonder, will there be lodging enough for such an infinite array of immortal atoms?' Truly, we do not know; but we presume that for even an infinitude of *atoms*, infinite worlds in infinite space may be found domain enough. 'But is it not ridiculous to suppose that creatures of such insignificant powers, such humble, such evidently limited capacities, should be immortal?' It is dangerous, O man, for *thee* to employ that argument. Is it not the very conclusion, which a superior intelligence to thine — if it knew thee only in the same way thou knowest thy despised fellow-brute — would form respecting thee? at least, if superior intelligence had not taught him what, it seems, superior intelligence has not taught *thee*, humility and modesty? 'Is it possible,' he would say, 'that this miserable biped, who physically manifests so marked a family resemblance to his cousin brutes; whose intellectual qualities, it is true, seem somewhat superior, though not always, to theirs, and insignificant at the best; whose moral qualities are apparently inferior; is

it possible that this miserable compound of vast pretensions, enormous vanity, ridiculous arrogance, meanness, envy, cruelty; who domineers over the other animals; who is at everlasting strife with his own species; who sprang out of the dust, as his supposed inferior fellows did, and returns to the dust as they do, can aspire to immortality? It is absurd. Let us hope that he is only a transient blot on the creation, and that the universe will one day be relieved from his odious presence.' Far be it from us (even for our own sake) to whisper any doubt of the fallacy of such an argument; but sure we are that an archangel might employ it with much more reason against us than we can against the meanest reptile that crawls. 'Well,' complacent man will say, 'if all animals are to be immortal, let us hope, at all events, that they will not occupy the same world, or live in inconvenient proximity.' 'Kind heaven grant it;' all the lower creation will eagerly reply. 'Man cannot be more anxious to get away from *us*, than we are to get away from *him*.'

But in very deed, by the light of philosophy, we know nothing about the matter either way, and that is precisely all we contend for. Upon points on which philosophers know nothing, philosophers should say nothing. That is a beautiful school of philosophy (though it has few disciples) which teaches man to say of most things: 'It may be so, and it may be otherwise. It is a point on which I only know that I do not know.' But it is a school in which, whatever his merits (and they were assuredly great), Descartes never enrolled his name.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Spottiswoode & Co., Printers, New-street Square, London.

00098044

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018